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## How does Hopkins use course evaluations?

By SIRI TUMMALA  
For The News-Letter

As students finish finals, the Office of the Registrar begins to sift through thousands of course evaluation surveys.

While some students neglect to thoroughly fill them out, course evaluation can make or break a course or a faculty member's reputation.

The evaluations are not mandatory, but students are encouraged to fill them out so that they may view their final grades as soon as they are released.

Students rate their courses on characteristics such as overall quality, teacher effectiveness and workload.

They can also write more detailed observations and suggest improvements in the comment section.

Vice Dean for Education Ed Scheinerman of the Whiting School of Engineering (WSE) and Professor Steven David of political science helped to create the online course evaluation system in 2011.

"We wanted a short survey because we really want students to fill these things out," Scheinerman said. "There is a set group of questions that go to every course, and then departments and profes-

sors can add a few custom questions as well."

Even though the feedback is anonymous, Scheinerman believes that students are taking the evaluations seriously.

"Occasionally we get a few snarky comments, but what we find most useful is when we read the comments and students have concrete suggestions," Scheinerman said.

Jeeva Jagabandhu, a sophomore, contradicted Scheinerman's point of

"Some of our department chairs have reassigned faculty on the basis of these evaluations."

— ED SCHEINERMAN,  
VICE DEAN FOR  
EDUCATION AT WSE

view, noting how he personally does not prioritize filling out the evaluations.

"I put in very little to no effort writing them, unless I am really passionately against a class or if a class

caused me to have a very strong stance," he said. "When I am actually putting in the effort into writing them, the factors I consider are usually the professor and definitely the course work — whether it's a lot or a little."

Scheinerman touched on the significant impact the course evaluations have on faculty.

"I have seen changes in faculty as a result of these comments," he said. "Some of our department chairs have reassigned faculty on the basis of these evaluations."

Scott Spencer, the director of Information

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Members of the Hopkins community gathered in Gilman Hall to become familiar with the actions of contract worker unions on campus.

## Contract worker unions rally for job security

By ALYSSA WOODEN  
For The News-Letter

Over the past few months contract workers employed at the University have been caught in a battle for higher wages, greater job stability and equal housing benefits.

On Thursday, Dec. 1, the Hopkins chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), along with labor unions Unite Here Local 7 and SEIU 32BJ, held a "Forum for Equality" to discuss the union's next steps and inform the student body.

The two major contract companies on campus are Bon Appétit, which employs food service workers, and Allied Universal, which employs the security guards commonly known as Hop Cops.

Over the summer, the University reviewed its contract with Allied Universal and opened up the bidding process for the new contract to non-

union companies. However after backlash from students and workers, the University eventually renewed its agreement with Allied Universal.

Contract employees, who work on campus but are not directly employed by the University, do not receive the same benefits as University employees do. Some believe this allows the University to discriminate against contract workers, many of whom are black.

The forum featured a panel of contract employees that was followed by a Q&A period with questions posed by members of the Hopkins community.

Joel Andreas, an associate professor of sociology, welcomed everyone on behalf of the Hopkins chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

"It's really important we get the whole campus organized — everybody

who works in everything, including the graduate students," Andreas said. "We've got to get the University used to negotiating with the people that it hires."

Andreas criticized the University's relationship with its contract employees and highlighted the difficulty they had faced while negotiating with Hopkins.

"We've come together... to work with some of the student groups and other groups in the city to

push Hopkins to change their policies," Andreas said.

The first panelist, Bon Appétit employee Latifah Pearson, outlined Unite Here's support for the Fight for 15, which is a national campaign advocating for a \$15 minimum wage.

"Johns Hopkins can definitely afford it," Pearson said. "The president of Johns Hopkins University received a raise from \$1.5 million to \$3 million

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## Cuban students weigh Castro's complex legacy

By SEBASTIAN KETTNER  
For The News-Letter

In Miami thousands of Cuban-Americans in the neighborhood of Little Havana took to the streets on Saturday, Nov. 26 and commemorated the death of a man that many view as a tyrant and others a liberator.

Fidel Castro, a revolutionary who governed the Republic of Cuba from 1959-2008, died on Nov. 25 at the age of 90. The cause of his death has not been disclosed.

In Cuba, thousands of students gathered in rallies, waving flags and chanting "I am Fidel" to honor his life.

However, junior Juliet Villegas, who grew up in Miami, thinks that Castro's regime left a lasting negative impact on the Cuban people.

"I believe that, for the most part, he'll be remembered as the monstrous tyrannical dictator he was," Villegas wrote in an email to *The News-Letter*. "Unfortunately, a lot of people — even non-Cubans who aren't being controlled by the government — believe that he was a great leader."

Although Castro's government succeeded in abolishing racial segregation laws and providing universal education and healthcare, his administration has also been criticized for restricting



WARREN K. LEFFLER/  
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS  
Fidel Castro died at the age of 90.

civil liberties and bringing the world to the brink of nuclear war.

Senior Ashleigh Samlut, whose grandparents went into exile after the revolution, believes that many will remember Castro as a powerful leader who stood up against the U.S. However, Samlut stressed that by standing up to America, Castro's regime had to rely on other world powers for support.

"As a communist country, Cuba has been forced to depend on other states to sustain itself, namely the former USSR and Venezuela, to subsidize key industries," Samlut wrote in an email to *The News-Letter*. "Fidel should be remembered as a tyrannical dictator that oppressed the Cuban people for decades: restricting freedoms, destroying the land, tanking the economy, and

SEE CASTRO, PAGE A6

## Flash Seminars encourage intellectual curiosity

By KATHERINE LOGAN  
For The News-Letter

Since the spring of 2015, Flash Seminars have provided a platform for students and professors to explore intellectual themes outside the pressure of the classroom.

The seven founders were determined to provide an outlet for groups of 10 to 15 students to delve deeper into a topic chosen by a professor. The seminars aim to generate discussion solely for the sake of learning.

Senior Caleb Warren was inspired by his sister,

who successfully implemented the flash seminar model at The University of Virginia. He founded the group with six other current seniors: Asa Stahl, Dylan Zerjav, Ricky Poulton, Thomas Boucher, Theodore Kupfer and Chris Petrillo.

Professors assign a short reading before the hour-long seminar, which requires no prior knowledge of the topic to attend.

Past seminars have included "Value and the Importance of What We Care About," "What do we talk about when we talk about the past?" and "The New

Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness."

According to Stahl, the seminars strive to fill a niche on campus where students can engage in animated discussion free from the pressure of grades.

"Even in my history classes and other humanities classes, people weren't discussing things at the level that I thought they would be when I entered college," Stahl said. "It seems like at Hopkins at least, there's this unspoken stigma about really participating within the classroom to an ex-

tent. For this kind of thing to occur, it had to happen outside the classroom."

The first seminar Warren and his roommates planned featured Stewart Hendry, a professor of neuroscience and expert on the Soviet Union, who discussed the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Their second seminar was more lecture-based and run by Mike Boston, an associate professor in the military science department, who spoke about Daesh, also known as the Islamic State. According to Warren, the

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#### Today's fast food nation

Amanda Auble chronicles America's changing fast food culture and her own journey to becoming a vegetarian.

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#### Lessons learned as a Blue Jay

Freshman Brandon Wolfe reflects on his first football season and the importance of camaraderie. SPORTS, PAGE B10

#### Happy holidays Hopkins!

Check out pictures from the annual Lighting of the Quads in this week's photo essay. PHOTO ESSAY, PAGE A12



## NEWS &amp; FEATURES

# Prof. explores history behind antihumanism

By **CLAIRE FOX**  
Senior Staff

As the concluding event in the Department of Anthropology's Fall 2016 Colloquium, Professor and Chair of the English Department Christopher Nealon gave a talk titled "Antihumanism and Anticapitalism," on Tuesday, Dec. 6 in Mergenthaler Hall. In his lecture, Nealon explored the academic history of antihumanism and its application in fields ranging from politics to environmentalism.

Nealon began by saying he chose a very neutral title for this talk but that what he aimed to discuss was more specific.

"When I posted to friends on Facebook that I was going to be joining you all, some of my avowed antihumanist friends gave it a big thumbs up," he said. "I realized I should have titled my talk something more honest and forthright, which is more like 'antihumanism makes for bad anticapitalism.'"

His project, which is tentatively called "The Limits of Academic Antihumanism," aims to develop a clear picture of the origins and extent of contemporary antihumanism and can be divided into having four distinct goals.

"First, by demonstrating how many different discourses in which antihumanism plays a role, I want to establish a previously unacknowledged breadth to it," he said.

Nealon explained that although antihumanist thought is often considered to have arisen during the French post-structuralist strain of thought during the 1960s, it actually has older origins and can be traced through history.

"The sources of antihumanism are as old as the classic rhetoric of misanthropy and include an enduring strain of Christian theology that insists on an infinite humbling distance between God and man," he said. "Many of the arguments made against humanism in these discourses can be traced to 19th century German debates about the philosophical significance in the advances in biology, which many at the time took to indicate the possibility that humanity is ill-suited to survival on Earth."

His second goal is to develop a clearer picture of the similarities between antihumanist languages, and his third goal is to deepen an understanding of antihumanism's left-leaning vocabularies that can be traced back to conservative sources.

Lastly, Nealon wants to display the idea that although antihumanism is generally framed as an argument about humanity, its claims may be most significant for the tone in which they are delivered.

"Our insignificance, for instance, can be imag-

ined and described in such tones that are both wonderstruck and baleful," he said. "So, imagine Carl Sagan telling us that we are tiny in the face of the universe and then imagine Heidegger saying it."

In the context of a contemporary discussion, Nealon pointed to the different areas where antihumanism is present. He spoke first about antihumanism in the political sphere.

"In contemporary politics, antihumanism shapes a whole flank of environmentalist discourse that bemoans humanity's supposedly innate repetitiousness," he said.

Moreover, antihumanist strains are visible in current anti-racist and queer rhetoric.

"Afro-pessimists argue that since full humanity has never been historically granted to black people in America, they might best give up on the category of the human altogether as a staging ground of appeals for dignity," he said. "A similar argument can be found in queer theory, which includes a whole variety of bids for seeing queerness as monstrous or inhuman."

Additionally, Nealon discussed how antihumanism is present in discourses about the future of society.

"We can even find a strange strain of antihumanism in the techno-optimistic rhetoric of Silicon Valley," he said, "not least in conversations about a singularity that is the projected future moment not so very far from now when robots will surpass humans in every aspect of cognition, possibly including emotion."

Naveeda Khan, an associate professor and director of graduate studies in the Anthropology Department, was most interested in the antihumanist discourse's relation to environmentalist rhetoric.

"Wearing my other kind of hat, not as an anthropologist, but as someone who is deeply interested in and concerned about climate change, the discussion made me wonder if there are many more processes at work than we have been giving credence to outside of antihumanism's critique of capitalism and its effect on our planet," Khan said.

Junior William Whalen-Bridge said that he attended the event out of pure curiosity, not knowing much about the topic of antihumanism beforehand, but that he walked away with several thoughts on the discussion.

"I mostly connected with the ideas presented about antihumanism in current topics and going forward," Whalen-Bridge said. "Even though it's a pretty intellectual term to be using and recognizing, it's something that sort of pervades a lot of debate right now, especially in our current political climate."

# Posmentier analyzes black reconstruction



COURTESY OF JACOB TOOK  
Professor Posmentier emphasized the importance of art in discussing the Anthropocene.

By **JACOB TOOK**  
For *The News-Letter*

New York University professor Sonya Posmentier previewed her most recent work in a reading titled "Black reconstruction and the Anthropocene" on Friday, Dec. 2. Posmentier stressed how important it is to challenge the American historical narrative, which she claims has been primarily determined by white men.

Several Hopkins affiliates hosted the event, including the Alexander Grass Humanities Institute (AGHI) and the Center for Africana Studies. The reading was part of the Institute's Critical Climate Thinking Lecture Series, which aims to generate conversation about climate change as part of the collective human experience rather than just within a scientific context.

Posmentier's essay addresses two works of art as a way to reflect on black culture in the geological age she refers to as the Anthropocene.

"Recent work by historians and literary scholars taking up... critical

climate thinking engages the widely accepted scientific thesis that we have by now passed from the Holocene to the geological age of the human, or the Anthropocene," she said.

She also identified the rising interest in artistic expression as a representation of the human experience in post-colonial and race studies.

Many recent scholars have argued that global warming calls attention to the need for re-examining and revising history, which some believe has a 'whitewashed' perspective. Posmentier said that this was especially relevant when considering the perspective of oppressed minorities during the relatively recent history of post-colonialism.

In her essay, Posmentier considers two art exhibitions by black women that respond to the historical narrative of colonialism as written by white men. They are *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby* by Kara Walker and *Funk, God, Jazz, and Medicine: Black Radical Brooklyn*.

Posmentier briefly explained why she chose these exhibitions before

launching into an analysis of their implications for post-colonial black culture.

"These works take out the defining tension between growth, repair, generation and continuity on the one hand and displacement, rupture and singularity on the other that defines cultivation and catastrophe through their pronounced relationship to two different historical periods, U.S. enslavement and U.S. reconstruction," she said. "Both of the works draw upon a reparative aesthetic in relationship to historical slavery... but they also invite us to rethink environmental relation as a process of ongoing reconstruction."

Walker's *A Subtlety* is an enormous sculpture of sugar depicting a black woman with highly exaggerated features. It is housed in an abandoned sugar warehouse in Brooklyn. The exhibition was open for three months during the summer of 2014 and was then intentionally demolished.

*Funk, God, Jazz, and Medicine: Black Radical Brooklyn* was situated in the historic center of Weeksville, a community in New York established by free and formerly enslaved black citizens after the abolition of slavery. Participants were able to walk through a fully furnished housed with recycled materials

that reflected postcolonial black culture.

Posmentier argued that these works reflected the need for considering environmental change when re-examining history.

"We might think of Bailey's project as an ecological one insofar as *Funk...* is an aesthetic of recycling and reuse, connecting a symbolic sense of reconstruction with the ethos of self-determination that pervaded the historical period," she said.

Though she identified that both works could be examined through an environmental lens, she contrasted the different ways in which they achieved this.

"Unlike the resource-intensive and earth-exhausting processes of cultivation — processes which Walker's work alludes to and mimics — Bailey's product seeks to make use of existing resources in what she calls a 'Funktion-al' way," Posmentier said.

Christopher Nealon, chair of the English Department, spoke briefly in reaction to the essay and then invited the other listeners to ask questions and provide feedback.

One graduate student brought up the importance of interdisciplinary study, and referenced the ongoing controversy surrounding the Humanities Center. In response, Posmentier emphasized some of the consequences of being "anti-disciplinary."

"Thinking about collaborative modes of study that will allow us to break out of disciplinary thought are important," she said. "The stakes of being anti-disciplinary are racial, the stakes are to challenge racial foundations of the things that we've historically called disciplines."

# SGA proposal supports sanctuary campus

By **SOPHIE JOHNSON**  
Staff Writer

The Student Government Association (SGA) passed a resolution to support a proposal to make Hopkins a sanctuary campus at its weekly meeting in Charles Commons on Tuesday, Dec. 6. The resolution, presented by Senior Class Senator Jonathan Brown, passed with 21 votes in favor, four votes in opposition and one abstention.

Brown explained that the resolution was a suggestion to the administration rather than a policy that would be immediately enacted. He defined how a sanctuary campus would act to protect undocumented immigrants.

"A sanctuary campus is where we prevent U.S. Immigration and Customs [Enforcement] (ICE) officers from entering Johns Hopkins campuses now and in the future without permission from the University, in line with existing restrictions on immigration enforcement actions on places of worship, schools, and hospitals," Brown said. "In order for ICE officials to come on campus, they would have to ask either President Daniels, Provost Kumar, Dean Wendland or Dean Schneider for permission."

Senior Class Senator Andrew Phipps initiated

a discussion on Baltimore's policies regarding undocumented immigrants.

"Are we exempt from the policy of Baltimore being a sanctuary city, as a private institution? Because Baltimore is a sanctuary city," Phipps said.

Freshman Class President Anthony Boutros countered by arguing that Baltimore was not a sanctuary city, although it had taken steps to protect immigrants and refugees.

"Stephanie Rawlings-Blake took certain actions that normal sanctuary cities would take, but Baltimore is not officially designated as a sanctuary city. It is a gray area," Boutros said. "So in the case of the federal government, which is the troops taking undergrads away, then technically the city is not a sanctuary."

Sophomore Class Senator Jennifer Baron initiated a discussion about the potential funding repercussions that might arise if Hopkins were to become a sanctuary campus.

"I think Trump said he might want to take federal funds away from universities, and so many schools at Hopkins take federal funding, including the School of Public Health and SAIS. Hopkins is a huge research institute," Baron said. "The only fear, I guess, would be if they did take away

funds from all those institutions."

Senior Class Senator Matthew Brown argued that the chances of losing federal funding would be low.

"It's a resolution, so there's no guarantee that the school will even adopt it," Brown said. "And if for some reason the school did adopt it and then there was an issue, that would be a whole separate thing. But the odds of that happening are very slim to none."

Phipps questioned whether the resolution's goals were too partisan.

"This isn't my view, so don't hate me after I say it. But isn't this theoretically taking a partisan view by saying we don't support the deportation of illegal immigrants, as opposed to the other partisan view

that we should deport illegal immigrants?" Phipps asked.

Brown argued that Hopkins has a neutral responsibility to allow its students to complete their college education.

"A student is already here with the assumption that they'll stay for four years and get an education. The school already has their money. And there's no way that Hopkins could give you housing and accept your tuition, but then if someone were to say, 'This is an illegal immigrant, let's take them off campus and deport them,' then Hopkins would be okay with that," Brown said. "It's about taking steps to show that if something were to happen, we would not accept it. Since you're a Hopkins student, you're part of us."

## Errata: Dec. 1 Edition

In the Dec. 1 edition of *The News-Letter*, the name Paul McHugh was misspelled in the article, "Transgender health center to open in 2017."

In "USC prof. analyzes translation software," Jonathan May's name was misspelled. The acronym LORELEI was also misspelled. It was also incorrectly stated that May worked on GALE.

It was stated that NLP stands Natural Language Processing. It actually stands for Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

*The News-Letter* regrets these errors.



## NEWS &amp; FEATURES

# Historian dispels common misconceptions about indigenous peoples

By MORGAN OME  
Layout Editor

Historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and journalist Dina Gilio-Whitaker spoke about their new book, *"All the Real Indians Died Off" and 20 Other Myths About Native Americans*, at Red Emma's Bookstore Coffeehouse last Friday.

The co-authors discussed common misconceptions about Native American culture and history and the recent protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota.

The event took place two days before the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced it would reroute the pipeline, a decision considered a victory for those who oppose the DAPL.

Over the past few months, thousands of protesters have traveled to North Dakota to demonstrate against the project. The protesters have been concerned that the

DAPL may pollute the Sioux tribe's drinking water and endanger sacred burial sites.

Dunbar-Ortiz began the talk by sharing one chapter titled, "Indians Were Savage and Warlike." It was selected for the event because of its connection to the Native American tribes protesting the pipeline. She traced the history of the word "savage" from America's founding to its use in society today.

"In the context [of Standing Rock], the authorities [have tried] to portray the water protectors as being violent and savage to tap into that fear of the savage that is in the DNA of the public," Dunbar-Ortiz said.

She then chronicled various military conflicts involving Native Americans, including the Battle of Wounded Knee and the French and Indian War. She spoke about how Europeans fought to expand their territory, economy and religion, while Native Americans fought to maintain social and eco-

nomics stability.

Throughout the chapter, the authors addressed widely held misconceptions.

"The narrative of Indian savagery is a lie told so many times that it became truth in the American mind," she said. "It was one of the necessary truths used to justify European, and later, American violence against indigenous peoples, to fulfill the demands of imperialism."

Gilio-Whitaker elaborated on the priority access she received as a Native American journalist covering the Standing Rock protests. She was there during Thanksgiving week and was on assignment for *Indian Country Today*. She estimated that there were between 8,000 and 13,000 people protesting DAPL's construction.

"It was disorienting. To be a native person in the settler's state is to always be invisible; it's to always have to defer to white norms, white values, white control,"



COURTESY OF MORGAN OME

Historian Dunbar-Ortiz (left) and journalist Gilio-Whitaker (right) discussed indigenous marginalization.

Gilio-Whitaker said. "To be in the camp as a native person is the opposite. It's to be with your own people in your own space."

During the question and answer period, audience members posed questions on topics like Native American history in public schools and the role of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the DAPL project.

One man commented on the contrast between Native American and European cultures.

"With Standing Rock, Western culture doesn't really care," he said. "We've come to think that we can live without nature."

Dunbar-Ortiz jumped in to clarify some of the audience member's claims. She distinguished the differences between European and colonial culture.

"I want to say something: It's not the culture of Europe, it's the culture of conquest [that is the problem]," she said. "They transformed into the culture of conquest and the

United States has taken up that DNA. I think you have to be really careful saying that something is inherent."

Another audience member inquired about the connection between capitalism and blood quantum, or the percentage of Native American blood in an individual's ancestry. Gilio-Whitaker drew comparisons between the capitalist aims behind both blood quantum laws and the one-drop rule, which was used to classify a person with any percentage of black ancestry as black.

"The one-drop rule is about maintaining slavery," she said. "At its core, it's about policing racial boundaries because with rape of slave women and the birth of those children, there's a constant replenishing of the slave population."

Gilio-Whitaker then went on to talk about how it perpetuates divisions between black people and white people.

"It works later to maintain segregation. That was

obviously a capitalist project," she said. "With native people, it was about getting the land, so you force assimilation in order to gain access to the land."

Audience members responded positively to the discussion.

Kim Richardson, a self-described urban Indian and member of the Haliwa-Saponi tribe in North Carolina, was selling T-shirts with phrases such as "We are Water" and "Support Indigenous Peoples Day." She was at the event to show support for the people of Standing Rock.

"Our tribe is facing similar issues with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, which is a natural gas pipeline coming through our community," she said.

Richardson appreciated that blood quantum was discussed in depth.

"I am of mixed ancestry," she said. "I am constantly asked what my ethnicity is. Native Americans seem to be the only ethnic group that needs to have a tribal card to show your blood quantum. That kind of hit home with me."

Journalist Jordannah Elizabeth was interested in exploring the Native American experience and thought that Gilio-Whitaker and Dunbar-Ortiz's book was a good way to start expanding her knowledge. She enjoyed hearing the authors' remarks, particularly Gilio-Whitaker's experience as a journalist.

"I [wrote down] a quote from Gilio-Whitaker when she talked about being a native journalist," she said. "As an African-American journalist working in a settler's world and being a music journalist in a white, male-dominated community... that resonated with me."

She also was pleased to see many Baltimoreans at the event.

"I feel very honored that Baltimore came out and that the attendance for this event was overwhelming," she said. "I was born and raised here so that makes me proud as a Baltimore native to see that we all are dying to be enlightened and are dying to support Standing Rock and the Native American nation in general."

MICA senior Ashley Wu decided to attend the event because of her interest in social justice and her desire to learn more about Native American communities.

"Instead of just wanting to state solidarity on social media, I actually wanted to understand the community and do more than just say something," she said.



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The authors connected their new book with current events, in particular, the Dakota Access Pipeline protests.

## World AIDS Day dinner commemorates lives lost to HIV

By EMMA ROALSVIG  
Staff Writer

The annual World AIDS Day dinner took place on Thursday in the Gilman Atrium. The event, which was presented by Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and the Office of LGBTQ Life, aimed to disseminate more information about AIDS and its treatments while stressing the importance of destigmatizing the illness.

The dinner featured special guest speaker Anastasia Pierron, a performance by Latin dance group Baila! and spoken word poet Mary Bowman.

Attendees received dinner as well as free sexual health goodies and STI testing, courtesy of Project RE. Christianne Marguerite, the president of Sigma Gamma Rho, discussed the purpose of the dinner.

"The JHU community is committed to the awareness of HIV/AIDS on today, World AIDS Day, and always," she said.

Guest speaker Anastasia Pierron, a Class of 2014 alumna with a bachelor's degree in Public Health, has worked in the field of HIV/AIDS for over four years. Pierron began her speech by asking her audience for a moment of silence.

"Today... is a day we commemorate the millions of lives lost to HIV/AIDS," Pierron said.

Significant progress has been made on AIDS treatment protocols, clinical and behavioral research and HIV and

STI testing. While these advancements have been essential, Pierron believes more work that needs to be done with increasing HIV awareness, prevention and treatment.

Pierron emphasized that there are people living with HIV who are not even aware of it, especially among young people. She highlighted that HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects certain populations including people of color, the LGBTQ community, people in sex work and people in the prison sys-

tem.

"It is estimated that 1.2 million people in the United States are living with HIV. And nearly one in eight of those are not aware that they're infected. In addition, as many as 50,000 people still become newly infected each year," Pierron said. "Among those newly diagnosed with HIV in the state of Maryland, the proportion of those in the age range of 20-29 have nearly doubled, from 16 percent in 2003 to 31 percent in 2012."

Pierron now works as the case manager for the adult PREP Program for HIV prevention at the Johns Hopkins Memorial Clinic.

"For those of you who have not heard about PREP, it stands for pre-exposure prophylactic. It is a daily pill that when taken can be over 90 percent effective for preventing an HIV infection," she said.

Pierron hopes that by sharing her experience, she can show that it is possible for anyone to get involved and play a role in helping to end HIV/AIDS.

She stressed that people can get involved in a countless number of ways to help end the illness. They can do this by getting tested, becoming educated about the facts of the virus, using forms of protection such as condoms or PREP and even

volunteering with a community organization that serves people living with HIV.

"If one day you want to live in a world where there are no more instances of HIV, then we need to act now, and it starts with you," Pierron said.

Mary Bowman, a spoken word poet from Washington D.C., drew on personal experience of living with HIV. She advocates for HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention all over the United States. Bowman's first poem focused on how her biological mother died from AIDS related illness.

"To place blame on the ignorant would be futile / so we as daughters of the incompetence search for knowledge in the wild / and pray / that our attempts to move on through the pain / produce healing sorrow for the cuts and scrapes that we've endured / on behalf of our mothers," Bowman said.

Sophomore Bryan Li came to the dinner because he wanted to know more about AIDS.

"I found the parts about PREP interesting, because I didn't really know those had existed prior to the World AIDS Day dinner. Events like these better educate students on issues that affect people on a worldwide scale," Li said.



## NEWS &amp; FEATURES

## Humanities Center allies mock administration



COURTESY OF ROLLIN HU  
HC supporters played 'Cards Against the Humanities Center' Thursday.

By SARAH Y. KIM  
For *The News-Letter*

Another demonstration against the potential closure of the Humanities Center (HC) took place last Thursday outside Brody Learning Commons.

This demonstration, called "Cards Against the Humanities Center," was a play on the party game "Cards Against Humanity," in which players complete fill-in-the-blank statements, typically by inserting words or phrases printed on cards that are considered offensive or inappropriate.

The event drew approximately 25 people, the majority of whom were graduate students from a variety of departments.

Up until this event, the demonstrations have mostly taken the form of sit-ins or demonstrations. Cognitive science graduate student Matthias Lalis, an organizer, explained why he and other protesters took a different approach on Thursday.

"We really wanted to do something fun that would rally the community of Hopkins — people who might not have heard of the situation with the

Humanities Center — and bring them into the conversation and make sure they are aware of what is going on," Lalis said. "And obviously, 'Cards Against the Humanities Center' was too good of a pun to pass up."

The completed statements on the cards generally expressed opposition to the closure and the administration.

For instance, "You receive a flood of emails from concerned students. You: \_\_\_\_\_" was completed with "lock them up," "send a meaningless template response" and "smoke Alexander's grass," the latter a reference to the recently formed Alexander Grass Humanities Institute.

Other completed statements included "You say closure, we say no deans no presidents," and "Public Safety Advisory — Students Thinking For Themselves Incident."

The winner of the game received a breakfast sandwich purchased from the Daily Grind to highlight what they see as the absurdity of a possible closure.

Graduate student and participant Jacob Kripp interpreted the event as a means of satire.

"It seems for me to be a pretty creative way of articulating what's happening but also 'satirizing' the absurdity of it," Kripp said. "I think that's kind of the theme here. It's exposing, through absurdity, how absurd what is happening to the Humanities Center is."

At the same time the game was being played, the University Board of Trustees had a meeting in the Hodson Trust Seminar Room in Brody, at which University President Ronald J. Daniels was present.

After finishing the game, protesters decided to initiate a confrontation.

However, by the time the protesters arrived, the Board had left the room.

Lalis felt that their absence was irresponsible on the Board's part.

"The Board of Trustees has a mandate to evaluate the University's top administrators, and to look after the long-term health and reputation of the University," he said.

"My first thought, on seeing the room empty, was disappointment that the Board of Trustees had chosen to flee a group of students who wanted to talk to them about an issue that precisely threatens the University's reputa-

tion and, for many of us, threatens our academic lives and careers."

He pointed out that the administration has consistently shown reluctance to come forward and talk with opponents.

"Every attempt at communication has been met with a form letter and constantly deferred meetings," he wrote. "It was unfortunate that we had to play cat and mouse with them all day in order to have a conversation — though at least we know now who is the cat."

While protesters believed that the Board had fled after being notified by Campus Security, Lieutenant Stephen Moffett stated the Board ended their meeting before the protesters decided to confront them.

Though participants were disappointed, visiting graduate student Hannah Wallenfels felt that the event had fulfilled its purpose.

"Of course it was a little unfortunate," she said. "But it was a good opportunity to keep the focus on what is going on here today and to signal to people that even though it's the [second to] last week of classes, we are not forgetting what is happening here."



COURTESY OF ROLLIN HU  
Approximately 25 people participated in the game outside of Brody.

## Profs. debate stability of U.S. Constitution

By KATHERINE LOGAN  
For *The News-Letter*

In the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, many Americans have started to question the stability of the U.S. Constitution during the upcoming Trump presidency.

Constitutional law scholars Sanford Levinson, the Garwood Centennial Chair at the University of Texas Law School, and Michael Greve, a professor of the Antonin Scalia Law School at George Mason University, debated the meaning of the constitution in the era of Trump on Thursday in Hodson.

Steven Teles, an associate professor of political science, moderated the discussion.

In his introduction, Teles spoke about exploring whether the U.S. Constitution lives up to the needs of an increasingly partisan and divisive modern America.

With this in mind, Teles said the idea behind this talk was to hear from experts in the field of political science from both sides of the political spectrum.

Levinson began the debate by criticizing the Constitution for not living up to democratic ideals.

"By reference to 21st century theories of democracy, the United States Constitution is not only clearly and demonstrably the most undemocratic constitution in what we might refer to as the Democratic West, but also, and at least as interesting, is the most undemocratic of the 51 constitutions in the United States," he said.

Additionally, according to Levinson, if the same Constitution were to be written and implemented at any point after the time of the 1787 Constitutional Convention, it likely would not have been ratified. He cited the current partisanship of the judiciary and the continued existence of the Electoral College as examples of what has led Americans to question the government's role.

With regards to Trump's victory, Levinson doubts that the president-elect has an understanding of key aspects of the Constitution like the separation of powers or how the Senate and the House of Representatives works.

"I think what he has an understanding of is demagoguery, and he is undoubtedly the most brilliant demagogue in our collective lifetimes," Levinson said. "The election of Donald Trump calls into question the validity of the belief that Americans are capable of sound reflection of choice in our own elections."

Levinson believes the entire the Constitution needs to be radically reassessed. He proposed that the country hold a new Constitutional Convention consisting of a randomly selected citizen's jury with experts from both the left and the right in the field of political science.

"My view is that the Constitution was and

remains radically defective," he said. "I want us at least to address the Constitution in all of its features and to really decide whether it serves us well in 2016. I think the answer is no."

Greve, on the other hand, saw the prospects of stability under Trump's presidency in a more positive light.

"Post-election, I'm cautiously optimistic, in some ways, about the prospect of restoring some modicum

of constitutional order," Greve said. "The partisan constellation on the Hill now in Washington may offer opportunities to restore somewhat more trans-

actional politics... So Congress may actually learn or relearn how to legislate, and the system may come to look a little more like the separation of powers we once knew."

Greve disagreed with the notion that fundamental problems lie within the Constitution itself, and that there is a need for another Constitutional Convention.

Rather, he believes that the deficiencies lie in the government's day to day functions and the execution of its responsibilities. However, at the same time, he doubts the government will take action any time soon to ease its gridlock.

"We're not supposed to have this upside down Constitution. We're not supposed to have this unconstrained executive or a Supreme Court that acts as a sort of rolling Constitutional convention," Greve said. "How did that happen? It's not that this, that, or the other clause of the constitution is wrong and could be fixed. That's parchment thought. It's that some of the premises on which the system rests have proven wrong or inoperative."

Senior Christian Cayon appreciated the opportunity to hear perspectives from both sides of the aisle.

"It was cool, especially the fact that they were representing two sides of the political spectrum; the left and the right and asking deep, philosophical, political questions about our country as a whole," Cayon said. "Some things, admittedly did go over my head, especially not having a political science background, but I really did enjoy hearing especially from academics like these."

Junior Jared Mayer agreed, adding that these kinds of events are especially important given the partisanship that has become characteristic in our country.

"Right now we're seeing this political fracture not only along lines of ideology, which is alarming in its own way but also in the inability of Americans to sit down and discuss fundamental issues and questions related to our common governance," Mayer said. "It's incredibly important, even at a campus like Hopkins, which is relatively speaking, politically mild, for students nonetheless to be educated."

## Flash seminars emphasize value of education

FLASH, FROM A1

contrast between the different styles of their first two seminars helped them determine the model for future Flash Seminars.

Warren explained that Flash Seminars are also designed to bring students together with peers from other fields and disciplines that they typically might not interact with.

"Hopkins has become so much more pre-professional and that was our biggest qualm," Warren said. "Hopkins is really tough that way. We felt like [Flash Seminars] was an intermediary because it's really a social event, people are telling stories, people are filling in gaps using anecdotes from their life, so it really is about getting to know other people as well as the ideas."

Tobias Marriage, an assistant professor in the Physics and Astronomy Department, who led a seminar called "The End of the Anthropocene: How Impending is Our Extinction?" agreed with the need for students to engage with one another outside of the classroom.

"I think our students do get exceptionally focused on achieving particular hurdles that are put in front of them — getting multiple degrees, getting that summer internship, things like that. It's not always clear to me how much students are trying to achieve particular goals set in front of them and how much of it is them trying to explore knowledge and asking questions that are important to them," he said. "These flash seminars afford a forum for intel-

lectual exploration outside of the classroom that is so crucial."

Warren highlighted that Flash Seminars provide a setting where students can interact with professors without the pressure associated with grades or networking.

"A lot of people don't go to office hours, or if they do they talk about just the test," he said. "But professors are some of the coolest people out there. They're doing really neat research. They all have hobbies, lives families. They really do care about students."

While Stahl and his roommates were interested in filling this niche on campus, they were initially uncertain as to how the seminars would be received by students.

"We didn't know how much it was going to be something that was desired [by students]," he said. "The fact that it didn't exist was disappointing, but we figured we would try. We were excited and enthusiastic to begin with, but we didn't think it would take off like it has."

In its beginning stages, Flash Seminars used a recommendation system to garner interest as a new organization. Warren explained that the objective of the recommendation system was to differentiate the organization from other groups.

"We thought if you see a flyer around campus it's hard to justify an hour of your time at Hopkins. We wanted to make it so that it was somewhat different," Warren said. "We did that by asking everyone that came to the first one to rec-

ommend three people, and then we sent those people an email that said to consider signing up for one. Then those three people recommended three people and so on. This year, we felt that we weren't reaching the entire student body, so we made an open group on Facebook and now people can sign-up."

Last Wednesday, former Provost and current Political Science Professor Robert Lieberman led a Flash Seminar called, "Post-Industrial Revolution? The Working Class and the 2016 Election." The discussion compared the social and economic changes that led to England's industrial revolution to the current status of America's working class in light of the recent presidential election.

Lieberman said he appreciated the opportunity to discuss the results of the election with students outside of the classroom.

"It's different than the typical student-faculty kind of interaction because there's nothing at stake really except getting together and thinking about things," Lieberman said. "No assignments, no grades, none of the usual trappings of a class, and you're getting people who were there because they're interested in giving up some of their leisure time to do this."

In response to the seminar, sophomore Emma Weinert was intrigued by the parallels drawn between the two time periods Lieberman discussed.

"It was an important discussion to have in the aftermath of the election, and it was a new interpre-

tation that I had not read or heard before," Weinert wrote in an email to *The News-Letter*. "Flash seminars, in general, are great at sparking new, unusual and interesting perspectives."

While junior Renee Scavone agreed that the topic was relevant, she noted that as a student less familiar in economics, it was difficult to understand.

"Though I think the professor overestimated the average knowledge of economics, it was still interesting content," Scavone wrote in an email to *The News-Letter*. "I definitely learned from the conversation even if I couldn't participate in it as much as I would have liked."

Flash Seminars are growing as a presence on campus. The organization also started the new initiative "Flash Dinners" which are discussions hosted by Warren and his roommates at their house. Eventually, they hope to have a weekly dinner that might serve as a follow-up to a previous seminars.

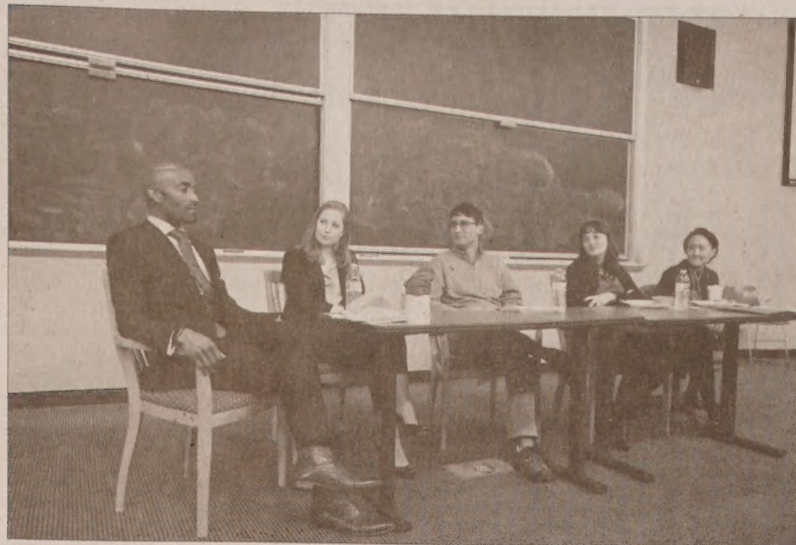
Stahl emphasized that students should experience what it's like to attend a Flash Seminar for themselves.

"If you view your goal of college as not only getting your degree... but also know that there is a more well-rounded and humanistic definition of education, then it's definitely worth it to at least subscribe to the email list and see what topics are being thrown around on a weekly basis," he said. "If nothing else, you've only wasted an hour of your time."



## NEWS &amp; FEATURES

# University hosts inaugural conference on U.S.-China relations



COURTESY OF YAO LIN

Experts at the event discussed the China's economic growth and America's relationship with the country.

By **PETER JI**  
Senior Staff Writer

The Hopkins chapter of Global China Connection hosted a regional conference focusing on the rise of China, the domestic and international challenges that the Chinese communist leadership faces and the changing geopolitics of the East Asian region.

The six-hour event featured experts in international studies, geopolitics and international affairs as well as student research presentations. The conference took place on Saturday in Hodson Hall.

Global China Connection is an international non-profit organization that connects colleges and universities to top leaders and academics on China issues.

Junior Lisa Xiao, chapter president of Global China Connection, gave the audience a few questions to consider at the conference's outset.

"What was China's motivation behind the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and how will it affect the U.S. relationship with AIIB member states?" she asked. "What are challenges to China's economic development? What will China look like in 2050? How can we best draw on our education and intellectual stamina to play an impactful role in the community of international economics and politics?"

Frank Jannuzzi, president and CEO of the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation, has also served on the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation is an organization promoting U.S. relations with Asian countries.

Jannuzzi provided his insight on China's recent economic prosperity. He was stunned by the country's rapid growth after traveling to China over the past thirty years, and believes that Americans were too.

"China without question is the amazing story of 21st century," he said. "At first, the U.S. response to the rise of China has been welcome and facilitating. So cute, little China joining the world! Wait, we can make money. We can capitalize off of the growth of China. Then we looked around and said, 'What if China doesn't like the rules? What if they want to disagree with me?'"

The formation of the AIIB in 2015 is one example of China exporting its development strategy to other nations by funding infrastructure projects in developing nations.

The AIIB currently has 57 members, while China holds the largest voting share with 26 percent of the vote.

Many experts view China's creation of the bank as a response to the Western-dominated nature of other international banks like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and Asian Development Bank. Natalie Lichtenstein, one of the architects of the AIIB, said that the U.S. and Japan not joining the AIIB was a boon to China.

"In retrospect, I think it was a benefit to the AIIB, not a financial benefit," she said. "So having the U.S. in would be great. I suspect that the U.S. has a lot more experience in organizing international organizations."

Jannuzzi said that as the rate of economic growth in China slows, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) will have to begin tackling the problems that rapid growth has created in order to maintain political control.

These include the en-

vironment, the aging of the country and income inequalities. The richest coastal provinces are sometimes ten times as wealthy as the poorer West. Ethnic unrest and government corruption are also tied to growing income inequality.

Jannuzzi believes that China is aware of all six problems and is working to correct them.

"They're pushing One Belt, One Road [a regional development initiative], pushing western development, investing in clean energy — they're by far the largest investors in clean energy — and investing in health care and the social safety net," he said.

According to Jannuzzi, China should loosen its Great Firewall, since its problems cannot be solved without freer access to information.

"One of the biggest challenges China faces is control of information. You can't keep some of the best minds in China without the free flow of information. You see this in the election of President Trump, the fake

news, the slanted media coverage, the meddling by foreign countries... I don't want to trivialize the threat to social stability through social media," he said.

The experts discussed Trump's recent phone call to Taiwan's president Tsai Ing-Wen and the role of Taiwan, which China considers a breakaway province, in U.S.-China relations.

David Brown, a foreign service officer for the U.S. State Department in Asia, believes the call reflects Trump's lack of understanding.

But Jannuzzi thinks it was a calculated move that signals Trump's strong stance against China on trade.

"We're uncertain about what President Trump will do with these issues," Brown said. "He doesn't have any foreign policy experience. He has appointed people, none of whom have experience with Asia. Last night, he agreed to make a phone call between the President of Taiwan and himself. Beijing sees this as a break of 40 years of tradition based on the agree-

ment of 1978-79."

Brown believes that although China-Taiwan relations are fragile, neither side will do anything too provocative. Both Tsai Ing-Wen and the general secretary of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping, like Donald Trump, are strong nationalists.

"I think there is reason to be optimistic that this 'cold peace' will last for the foreseeable diplomats, which for former diplomats is two-to-three years. You can't see much in the future beyond that," Brown said. "I don't think it is in either side's interest to have the relationship deteriorate into a confrontation. Xi Jinping has great domestic problems, and he is consolidating his position for the 19th National Congress coming up. Tsai is not saying that she rejects the one China."

Trump has also promised to reject the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), an American-led trade liberalization pact, on day one of office. The speakers said that this would likely embolden China in the South China Sea, where it is building up military

capacity and constructing artificial islands.

Hopkins graduate student Hannah Gu said that the talk was heavily focused on China's foreign relations. She hoped to hear more about Chinese industry.

"I thought it would talk more about Chinese industrial development. I think China is facing a problem now because many companies are moving factories to Southeast Asia, and China needs to think about how to switch its industry," she said.

Prospective SAIS student Mayumi Rivera said that the talk helped her decide on whether to go into East Asian studies.

"I came with Mr. Brown. I did not know anything about this before, but he's been really supportive of me into Asian studies, which I'm applying for next year. I think this was very informative," she said. "I've not been aware of what's going on in Asia, and this gets me back on track. These three speakers were very interesting, and they will get me back into what I want to do."



COURTESY OF YAO LIN

Foreign Service Officer David Brown elaborated on the implications of Trump's recent phone call to Taiwan.

## Students and professors reflect on course evaluation process

EVALS, FROM A1

cation Development in the Office of the Registrar, commented on the anonymity of the evaluations.

"The students only see the summarized version, but faculty members can see the individual comments," Spencer said. "They don't know who left the comment, but they can see all of them."

Scheinerman noted how this anonymity sometimes leads to comments that are rude to professors.

"Most students are very thoughtful, but we get a few that write some nasty and very inappropriate comments," he said. "Those turn out to be a lot more hurtful than you can imagine. I have had professors very upset by what students have written, some of it misogynistic and some of it racist."

He urged students to consider their evaluations carefully.

"We don't want to restrict what people want to say. These things are held in confidence, but be thoughtful that we read these things in care," Scheinerman said. "If you have some criticism, by all means criticize but be specific about what the problem is and your suggestions for improvement. But personal attacks have no place here."

Scheinerman pointed out from the evaluations, professors of low-rated classes are directed to other campus resources to improve.

"We have a group on campus called the Center for Education Resources housed up in the library," he said. "We often ask professors who are struggling to go and use their services to improve their teaching."

Scheinerman recounted how some of these suggestions are quick solutions for professors.

"We once had a bunch of students complain that the professor didn't speak loudly enough, so we got that professor a microphone system to work in the classroom," he said. "There are sometimes easy fixes. There are also better interventions to help professors become more organized."

Christopher Conso-lino, a Ph.D. student in the History Department and a teacher, explained his experiences reading course evaluations.

"The evaluations that

I really paid attention to were the ones where the students rated me low on some things but then had positive things to say about the course, or students who rated me highly but then put in critiques," he said. "I took those a little more seriously because sometimes the [evaluation's] questions are difficult just through that number system. It's very difficult to get a 'what was I doing right, and what was

I not doing right."

After the course evaluations are submitted online, the staff in the Office of the Registrar average the course ratings and summarizes the comments, which are then released early the following semester.

Ashlie Brown, the Information Analyst Applications Resource Manager in the Office of the Registrar, explained the process of reading through the evaluations.

"We go through each evaluation, each course individually," she said. "We read through the comments, and we go from there. It is line-by-

line of each student's response and coming up with a summary that way. It takes about a couple of months to go through all of the evaluations."

Brown commented upon the overall effectiveness of course evaluations.

"I think [evaluations] are pretty helpful. I think they give a very real look in terms of what the students are experiencing in the classroom, how the professors are actually performing, and how effective the coursework and materials are for each individual course," Brown said. "Sometimes they can be too honest, but overall it's helpful."

Brown also pointed out a pattern between the course evaluations submitted by students of WSE and students of the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences (KSAS).

"I definitely think the [WSE] students are a little bit more in-depth and more concise in terms of what their responses are while students in [KSAS] provide a general overview," she said.

Mira Sobhy, a junior, commented on how she uses course evaluations.

"I think course evaluations are very helpful because it allows me to see the classes that are and are not rated well," he said.

Sobhy said that she looks at the course holistically when evaluating it and not just at the professor.

"Course evaluations are very good at telling you how the course is not just the professor," she said. "I would never give a professor a bad rating just because of my inability to do well in a certain class."

Roshni Ahmed, a junior majoring in International Studies and Sociology, looks at a variety of courses when selecting her courses.

"I usually look at the ratings. I have very high standards, so I try to look at 4 and above," she said. "I use that plus RateMyProfessor because I think a class really depends on who the teacher is to make it interesting."

On the other hand, junior Anishka Agarwal pointed out that she prefers other sources when deciding to take a course.

"To be honest, I don't actually reference them when looking at future classes," she said. "I end up using RateMyProfessor and other outside of Hopkins affiliation sites or just word of mouth and talking to people. It is more convenient, and I personally value the opinion of someone I know personally more so than reading through a summary."



## NEWS &amp; FEATURES

# Students react to Fidel Castro's death

CASTRO, FROM A1  
murdering thousands in the process."

Fidel Castro ceded most of his power in 2006 to his younger brother, Raúl Castro, due to his own declining health. He formally resigned his presidency in 2008. Raúl Castro has governed Cuba since then, although he has told the Cuban people that he plans to resign in 2018.

Although Castro's government succeeded in abolishing racial segregation laws and providing universal education and healthcare, his stay in power was plagued by widespread destitution. His administration is also criticized for taking many basic freedoms away from the Cuban people and for pushing the world to the brink of nuclear war.

During the nine days of mourning following Castro's death, alcohol sales were suspended, flags flew at half-mast and all shows and concerts were cancelled. Villegas cited this as evidence that change will come slowly.

"Unfortunately, because Cuba continues to fall under the communist Castro regime, I don't see much rapid change happening any time soon. The people of Cuba were forced to mourn the death of a tyrannical dictator, which is a clear sign of the horrible situation," Villegas wrote.

Villegas emphasized the Castro government's autocratic nature and how this will affect how he is remembered in Cuba.

"Because of the way the education system works in Cuba and the control the government has over everything, living in Cuba you are trained to idolize Fidel," she wrote. "Luckily, most Cubans see beyond that and understand how horrible of a person he truly was, but sometimes being able to have that insight is a privilege. Those who do believe that he was a monster and want to celebrate in Cuba can't, because they're not allowed to."

Senior Corey Payne, who studied abroad in Cuba last semester, disagreed. In his experience, he found that free speech existed and that people did question the government in Cuba. Payne said that many of the people he met believed the revolution was a mainly progressive force that needed reform.

"I found it interesting and unsurprising that there were such divergent reactions to Fidel's death in Havana and in Miami," Payne wrote in an email to *The News-Letter*. "But while there is real happiness and excitement among Cuban Americans, I think it's also important that we see the real sorrow and mourning among many Cubans on the island. The real story of Fidel's life won't be found in Cuban state propaganda or in U.S. anti-communist propaganda."

Sophomore Camila Montejo-Poll thinks Castro's death came at an important time in Cuban political history. Montejo-Poll was born in Havana, and still returns regularly to visit family.

"His death... was important in a time like this when more people are standing up to the government and counter-revolutionary organizations are gaining traction in Cuba," Sosa wrote.

Montejo-Poll wrote in an email to *The News-Letter*. "It acted sort of as an impulse for many people that their efforts might see actual results sooner than they thought. It's also sparking a conversation not only about what kind of man Castro was, but about the current conditions of the Cuban people."

Under the Obama administration, steps have been taken toward improving relations with the Cuban government. Since 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro have aimed to normalize relations. The nations established the Bilateral Commission to facilitate diplomatic dialogue.

The American embassy reopened in Havana on July 20, 2015, and the Cuban embassy was reopened in Washington, DC. On Mar. 20, 2016, Obama was the first sitting president to travel to Cuba since Calvin Coolidge in 1928.

Although President Obama believes that change is possible while working with the Castro administration, senior Steven Sosa, whose parents emigrated from Cuba, thinks that good relations can only be established between the two countries if Cuba undergoes major changes.

"Only once Cuba becomes a truly free, democratic state can relations between Cuba and America become truly better. Cuba to this day still refers to us as 'imperialists' and other Cold War era terms. As long as the same regime stands, we can never truly be allies," Sosa wrote in an email to *The News-Letter*.

Samlut believes that diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States will actually harm the Cuban people more than it will help them.

"Fidel's death is symbolic; it represents the end of an era, but not necessarily the end of the regime, especially because he was no longer in power at the time of his death," Samlut wrote. "The possibility of regime change is not only unlikely, it will certainly not occur given the current international climate, specifically, President Obama's executive orders that have 'opened up' the island."

According to Samlut, Raúl Castro's economic reforms and greater global tourism will keep the communist government in power.

"Raúl's economic reforms have fostered state-led capitalism, privileging certain party members and incentivizing them to limit competition by keeping the market closed," Samlut wrote. "As long as the outwardly communist regime remains 'open' to tourists, American or otherwise, it will continue to generate sufficient capital, either directly (through dollar penalties), or indirectly, such that it will only become further entrenched and more able to continue its daily oppression of the Cuban people."

Sosa hopes that Fidel Castro's death will cause people to look into what he did during his time as "El Comandante."

"I hope the world as a whole becomes more educated on who Fidel actually was, so that someone like him doesn't come into power again," Sosa wrote.

# Union members discuss labor at Hopkins



COURTESY OF HOPKINS STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY  
Students, faculty and contract employees gathered in Gilman Hall to identify avenues for cooperation.

FORUM, FROM A1  
per year. Fifteen dollars is nothing compared to that, when we're the ones who deal hands-on with the students every day."

Although the state of Maryland is working to pass a \$15 minimum wage law by 2022, Pearson stressed that in six years, with the rising cost of living, \$15 will be worth less than it is now.

Jonathan Hutt, an employee of Allied Universal and member of the SEIU 32BJ union, spoke about the fight for job stability.

He said that if the University decides to switch contractors, current employees would be in danger of losing their jobs.

He cited a case at The Peabody Conservatory several years ago when a new company came in and replaced the contract employees with their own. The Union believes that the University should require new companies to retain already employed workers.

A third panelist, Bon Appétit worker Robin Gaines, brought up an incident where Director of Dining Services Bill Connor wanted to have "Johns Hopkins" written on employees' jackets instead of "Bon Appétit."

"If it's a big deal about the logo on the jackets, then I feel as though we're Johns Hopkins. I want those same benefits," Gaines said. "I want the same benefits as the Johns Hopkins employees. I want a better house. I want a better neighborhood. I want job stability; I want \$15 or more. I want a better way of life, period."

Peter Sabonis, a member of the Baltimore Housing Roundtable, discussed the University's Live Near Your Work program and the possibility of implementing it for contract employees.

Through this program, Hopkins employees are given a \$35,000 grant for buying a home in neighborhoods close to campus, which have higher property values than other parts of Baltimore.

"We want the opportunity to maintain some affordable housing in those communities that are essentially gentrifying," Sabonis said. "The idea is to carve out a section of the housing market that is not subject to gentrification."

He explained that

Hopkins is unlike other employers, since the University is an active developer that owns city property. Sabonis mentioned alternative models to help protect sections of the housing market from gentrification.

"We also want the opportunity to maintain some affordable housing in those communities that are essentially gentrifying," he said. "And the way to do that is through things like community land trusts, shared equity models, limited equity co-ops."

Andreas criticized elements of the University's benefit plan, comparing the health insurance he receives to that of his wife, who is a teacher and union member at a Baltimore public school.

Even though Hopkins has a hospital, even though I go to the Hopkins doctors, it still has a much bigger co-pay, much bigger deductibles," Andreas said.

During the Q&A session, Sabonis noted that there is an environmental component to providing contract workers with nearby affordable housing. The further an employee lives from his or her workplace, the more energy is expended during the commute.

"If Hopkins cares about being environmentally responsible and being a green campus, you want your workers to live near where they work," Sabonis said.

One audience member said that giving someone money to buy a house, as the University does through its Live Near Your Work program, shows that the Univer-

sity is investing in that person and that supports a long-term relationship. He argued that the University should be compelled to invest in its contract employees too.

After the Q&A, Local 7 member Alberta Palmer thanked contract workers for coming to the forum and commended them for their courage.

She recognized and thanked the students in attendance and reminded the audience that the Union would be petitioning in front of Charles Street Market on Dec. 7 and 8 to get more students involved.

"This is not going to be an easy fight... we can't back down, we've got to make sure they back down," Palmer said. "We've always, always been stronger together. We've always been at our most powerful when we stand together."

Students who attended the forum showed genuine curiosity for many of the concerns that union members addressed.

"I'm just generally interested in social issues, social policy, and I want to learn more about the issue, which is why I'm here," freshman Alex Walinskas said. "I agree with the fact that... most of these contracted positions are filled by African Americans, and that puts the University in a discriminatory situation."

Senior Chase Alston, a member of the Hopkins Chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Black Student Union (BSU), shared Walinskas' perspective.

"In general, a lot of issues we talk about in those two groups [are] black labor issues," she said. "Labor issues are something that need to be paid attention to. The fact that the majority of the people that are working for this institution are black is an important issue that students should be caring about, but also

that the University should care about."

Derek Schilling, president of the Hopkins chapter of the AAUP and professor in the Department for German and Romance Languages and Literature, hoped to gather information about contract employees' working conditions.

"I'm interested in seeing what kinds of issues are coming up through employees at the University," Schilling said, "[and] disseminating widely the information so that those of us who are fortunate enough to be employed as lecturers and faculty members know exactly what the living conditions are for our staff."

Walinskas highlighted how important it is for students to remain involved.

"As students who are paying to go here, we should have a say particularly when it does affect the wellbeing of people who are working in this institution," Walinskas said. "So at the very least, students should stay informed on the matter."

Alonzo Mitchell, a cashier at Charles Street Market, echoed how important it is to remain informed.

"I think students should know all of what's going on here on campus," Mitchell said. "And I think it's very important for students to come out to these meetings so they can be... more aware of what's happening."

Mitchell noted that, while he was happy with his employment overall, he was disappointed in the disconnect between contract workers and the University.

"I've been here for 36 years now. It's really good, I love working here. It's like a family, and it helps me all the way around," he said. "The negative is that we're not more connected with the University. I think it would be more helpful if we were."

The forum ended on an optimistic note, with participants feeling encouraged by the sense of unity and support among students, faculty and contract employees.

"I think it was a lot of affirmation in terms of knowing that it's not just me, knowing that it's everybody as a united front," Alston said.

Hutt shared Alston's hopeful outlook.

"If we continue to have these meetings... we can get things done because it shows strength," he said. "If we do this, if we show them how strong we are, then they're not going to put up a fight against us."

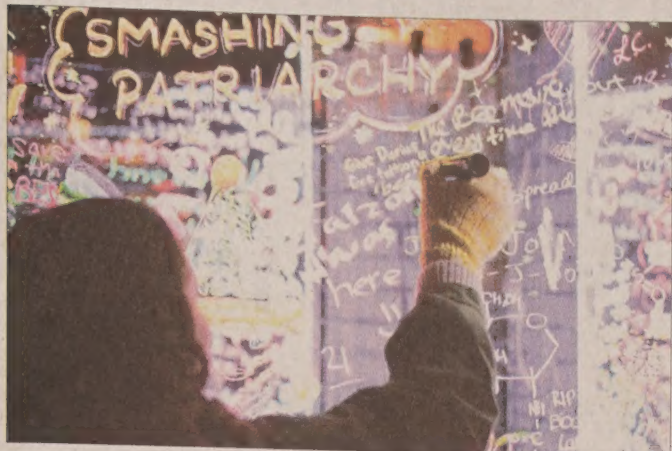


COURTESY OF HOPKINS STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY  
Union members and a Baltimore Housing Roundtable member discussed topics including affordable housing.



## NEWS &amp; FEATURES

# Students criticize execution of Lighting of the Quads University named top spender in research



KAREEM OSMAN/PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

Students were disappointed that this year's lighting did not take place on Keyser Quad.

By **KAREN WANG**  
For *The News-Letter*

The annual Lighting of the Quads took place in front of Shriver Hall on Wednesday, Dec. 7. The event was moved to Wyman Quad because of the construction taking place on Keyser Quad.

This year's event featured a roller skating rink, created by reflecting light off of an assemblage of plastic squares on Levering Courtyard, and the traditional lighting ceremony. There was a Prize Wheel hosted by Student Financial Services, a fire spinning performance hosted by the Entertainer's Club, a penguin ice sculpture and two art installations. The 2017 Spring Fair theme, "Funkytown" was also revealed.

The ceremony began with an introduction by Student Government Association (SGA) Executive Vice President junior Anna Du, and featured performances by the Hopkins pep band and a cappella groups the Sirens, Ketzev and the AllNighters. Du then welcomed

Provost Sunil Kumar, who spoke on behalf of University President Ronald J. Daniels, who was unable to attend the celebration.

Kumar focused his speech around a 2,700 years-old Hindu document included in the ancient sanskrit traditions. Kumar quoted three lines from the document, which read "Lead me from untruth to truth / Lead me from darkness to light / Lead me from mortality to immortality."

"Part of this lighting is more than just turning on a fake switch, maybe this is a symbol of all of us trying to go from less truthiness to more truthiness," Kumar said. "Aren't those what traditions are all about? Isn't that what community is all about? Even when we are gone, we will have a mascot, we will have a cappella groups and we will have the Lighting of the Quads."

The celebration also featured refreshments like donuts, kettle corn, hot chocolate and decorate-your-own gingerbread

Faculty-Student Interaction program rewarded students with chocolate and Silly Putty for writing down faculty members whom they believed made a difference.

Many students were disappointed, however, with this year's Lighting of the Quads. Students cited the lack of fireworks, the lack of SGA class gifts and the location change from the Keyser Quad to the Wyman Quad as key differences from previous years. Junior Rachel Krieger expressed dissatisfaction with the change in scenery.

"It's less iconic. I feel like the view of Gilman is very quintessential Hopkins," Krieger said. "That's the background of so many profile pictures, [and] they don't have the class gifts, which is kind of sad."

Freshmen experiencing Lighting of the Quads for the first time were also dissatisfied by this year's celebration. Many thought that since the event took place at a different location, it would not live up to the expecta-

tions of prior years. Freshman Jeffrey Wang echoed Krieger's sentiment about the event not taking place in front of Gilman Hall.

"I'm pretty disappointed that [SGA] is not giving out any [class gifts] this year, but moreover I'm more disappointed in the fact that we're having Lighting of the Quads in front of Shriver instead of Gilman because it's under construction," Wang said. "Hopkins is traditionally known for the Gilman building. It's the trademark of all the Snapchat filters and all the popular tours. Shriver is just kind of another building; It's not really anything special. But at the same time it's not too bad because I'll have a greater appreciation for [the event] next year."

Freshman Francesca Kroll would have preferred if this year's celebration had followed tradition.

"It would have felt like it was more connected to everyone else and to tradition and what people were used to," Kroll said. "Gilman is what this school is known for on our campus, and that's the main hub usually."

The absence of SGA class gifts contributed to a general feeling of disappointment with the event. Sophomore Emma Lee felt that critical parts of the event were omitted.

"I think it was to the

detriment of the whole event that it didn't really follow what has traditionally happened, like the class gift and the fireworks. Hopkins students have come to expect a show to be put on. That was unfortunate, and I was disappointed," Lee said. "A lot of people, especially sophomores through seniors, were expecting an upgrade from the gift they got last year because they've moved up a year in seniority and then [SGA] just didn't give any out."

Responding to this disappointment, SGA Sophomore Senator AJ Tsang attributed the change to the smaller size of Wyman Quad.

"Class councils were told they couldn't provide physical gifts this year because the school was concerned about

safety on the smaller Wyman Quad," Tsang wrote in an email to *The News-Letter*. "In previous years, the beginning of gift distribution has led to some swarming and physical

harm to the students giving out gifts, as well as [to] the students [who] receive gifts first. Oftentimes, these two groups of students are compressed by the crowd's forward momentum. With the Keyser (Gilman) quad, this was a less of a concern because there's more space to let people fan out."

"The whole event...didn't really follow what has traditionally happened."

— EMMA LEE,  
SOPHOMORE

## University named top spender in research

By **KELSEY KO**  
News & Features Editor

For the 37th straight year, the University has been named the leader in research and development (R&D) spending among American colleges in fiscal year 2015.

The record \$2.306 billion in R&D spending was over double that of the University of Michigan, which was ranked second place by the National Science Foundation (NSF) report. The University's spending has gone toward a variety of fields and research projects, from investigations into what has stopped galaxies from making stars to inquiries into why bats wiggle their heads.

Most notably, the University has made discoveries into drugs that may work against Zika virus and a one-dose vaccine for dengue virus, the most prevalent mosquito-borne disease.

This is not the first time that the University has broke a record in R&D spending. In fiscal year 2002, Hopkins was the first university to break \$1 billion in spending towards research.

University President Ronald J. Daniels is currently spearheading a study, commissioned by Congress, that will investigate how to solve a trend of decreased federal research funding.

## Happy Holidays from the News-Letter family!





## VOICES

Hopkins is a diverse university, where an incredible mix of cultures, academic interests and personalities coexist and thrive...

## Analyzing Elizabeth Bishop's deep "Sestina"



Bessie Liu  
Write Me

According to Poets.org, out of all types of structured poetry, the sestina has one of the most complex forms. It is comprised of 39 lines separated into six-line stanzas and a three-line envoi at the end of the poem. Its most defining feature is its repetition of the same six words that end each line. Each stanza features these six end-words in a different order.

I first came across the poem "Sestina" by Elizabeth Bishop in my senior-year AP Literature class. At first, having been unfamiliar with the sestina form, I did not recognize that this poem was a sestina at all and was thoroughly confused by all the repetition of images and words.

It wasn't until last week, when I came across the poem again in my *Norton Anthology*, that I realized the poem was a sestina, explaining the circular imagery and motions throughout the poem.

"Sestina" begins with the image of "September rain" falling on the house of a grandmother and her grandchild, both of whom are in the kitchen watching the tea kettle boil and reading an almanac.

Tracing the basic "plot" of the poem, we see the grandmother turn to more practical affairs like adding more wood to the stove and preparing the tea in the kettle. However she is continually drawn back toward the child who draws a picture of a man for her. The poem ends with both characters absorbed back in their own actions.

The poem revolves around the differences in emotion between the grandmother and the child. It lays the grandmother's pain and grief next to the child's curiosity and naivety. The six words repeated in each stanza are "house," "grandmother," "child," "stove," "almanac," and "tears," and these repeated words and resulting circular imagery in "Sestina" seem to be at its heart in developing the comparison between the two characters.

The grandmother is described as "laughing and talking to hide her tears" in the first stanza, but later in the poem, her teacup is "full of dark brown tears." The lines showing her ever-present pain and inner turmoil are interwoven with the lines showing the child's contentment as she "shows [her pictures] proudly to the grandmother." They are interwoven because the sestina form dictates it.

In fact it's implied that the root of the grandmother's sadness is represented in the child's drawing

of "a man with buttons like tears." Although the grandmother's reaction to her grandchild's drawing isn't explicitly stated, the next stanza details "little moons [that] fall down like tears / from between the pages of the almanac."

Readers can infer that this man was important to the grandmother, and she is trying to hide her unresolved grief from her grandchild, probably to preserve the child's bright and curious outlook on the world.

Obviously the choice of the six repeating end-words guides the images and messages that a sestina can contain. But just the fact that there are repeating end-words at all — in addition to various extra words that Bishop

The poem revolves around the differences in emotion between the grandmother and the child.

chose to repeat, including "rain" and "sings" — emphasizes the cyclical nature of the grandmother and grandchild's existence. Each seems stuck in her respective emotional state. The grandmother cannot rise out of her mourning, while the child continually draws houses and wonders about the man with buttons.

Upon reading this poem the first time, I found it merely intriguing, but it wasn't until I read through it again that I began to feel the sadness underlying the grandmother's actions. I appreciate that this sestina, like all good poems, offers readers a deeper meaning than its literal presentation on the page and that it accomplishes this feat by embracing and taking advantage of its structural format rather than succumbing to its limitations.

## Why I care about the Dakota access pipeline



Alicia Badea  
The Political Compass

Tear gas. Pepper spray. Rubber bullets. Dogs, concussion grenades, painfully high-pitched sound devices. Water cannons blasted in sub-30-degree weather. People standing there in freezing water.

There were chants, too. And prayers. Songs. Signs. Solidarity. The coming together for a cause, a movement, a purpose — for caring for one another, our well-being and our futures.

The situation at Standing Rock was one which, at its foundation, was hauntingly familiar. Although we approached it in the context of the present-day with current terminology, it was ultimately a contemporary manifestation of the same issues which have served as themes throughout American history: Native American rights and sovereignty, climate change, ecological justice, excessive use of force by police and tensions between corporations and the people whom their actions affect.

The seeds of discord were sown two years ago, when Energy Transfer Partners finalized the route of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), mapping it dangerously close to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe reservation. The company initially considered an alternate path near Bismarck, North Dakota, but settled for the revised model due to concerns about the pipeline's proximity to water supply sources — concerns which, in regards to the Sioux peoples, had all but evaporated.

The planned route

would have run only a half-mile upstream from the reservation. Standing

Rock relies on a single water source: the Missouri River. A pipeline built under it would have

risks that any leak, even a small one, would poison the water supply of over 8,000 people.

As the protestors, otherwise known as water-protectors, have been chanting for months, water is life. DAPL would have placed the Natives' lives in jeopardy by endangering the sanctity of this vital element. They would have been dependent on the "safety" of the constructed pipeline.

Yet, as the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration reports, hundreds of incidents occur each year at oil and gas pipelines, with the total sum nearing 4,000 incidents since 2010. It is no wonder then that the water-protectors had little to trust in. No pipeline is truly safe.

DAPL moved from proposal to reality long ago, despite the fact that the United States Army Corps of Engineers (the federal agency responsible for approving the project) had not consulted with Standing Rock leaders. The land DAPL attempted to gain access to in order to complete the line, although not technically within the bounds of the reservation, is nonetheless full of the indigenous peoples' heritage.

Its history, strained with struggle, attests to that. In 1868 the Treaty of Fort Laramie promised the Native people this section of



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The plan for the DAPL was for it to run near the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe reservation.

land. Not a dozen years later, the government rescinded that "guarantee," forcing the Sioux peoples to relinquish much of it. The Supreme Court ruled in 1980 that at least one area of this land was seized unjustly, as if not all of it were bathed in colonialism.

Before any decision was called, the construction crews had already bulldozed through sacred land, burial sites whose cultural significance to the Sioux peoples is of the highest caliber. DAPL did not have permission to touch that area, yet they proceeded to destroy it anyway. Given free reign, the company's disregard for the members of Standing Rock would have allowed violations of their security and heritage.

The Corps has a duty to consult with Native peoples whenever ancestral land is concerned, regardless of its proximity to reservations. It is indigenous peoples' right. The Sioux sued the Corps for infringing that right and protested DAPL for their right to clean water along with thousands of non-Natives who joined.

Now they have won.

After stalling for several months, the Corps, as of last week, denied DAPL the easement to construct in that one crucial point, the land beneath the Missouri River.

This one victory, this one realization of justice, cannot erase the proliferative injustices etched into history, whose weeds burgeon even now. Sacred lands have already been demolished. The U.S. is already one of the biggest contributors to man-made climate change.

Nonviolent protesters have already been brutalized by a militarized police force, simply for protecting the right to water, the right to culture and the right to a homeland.

Yet today, at least, we can say the interests of corporations have not triumphed over the rights of people. Today environmental racism has not won. Today our steady march toward ecological disaster has been challenged, if only in the slightest.

Today the echoes of history, of indigenous peoples struggling to retain basic rights — their land, their culture, their sovereignty — against an invasive, indifferent government will no longer be made to reverberate with renewed strength.

The struggle does not end here. We have put people over convenience, ease, and profit. Today we have a victory. We must continue to be vigilant, so that it does not remain the exception of today but becomes the routine of every day.

## Why I waited 10 years for the new Final Fantasy game



Sudgie Ma  
New Game

After waiting for over half my lifetime, through 10 years of "development hell," last week, the video game *Final Fantasy XV* was released.

I remember staying up past my bedtime to watch streams of gaming conven-

tions like E3 to see whether a new trailer for the game would come out. More often than not, I'd go to sleep disappointed. I have never anticipated a game as much as I have this one, and for good reason.

I was seven at the time that the game was announced under its original title, *Final Fantasy Versus XIII*, and now I'm a freshman in college. People have graduated, married and started families while waiting for this game to come out.

The game's premise is simple, and it's nearly the only thing that's stayed constant throughout these ten years of development. You follow

Prince Noctis and his best friends on a journey to reclaim his kingdom, Lucis, which was invaded by the empire of Niflheim.

I've followed this game through its entire development, which means I'm inevitably going to notice even a slight deviation in the tone of the game from its pre-2013 trailers. Not that there haven't been major changes during its 10-year development. In fact there were three that occurred around the time the game was renamed *Final Fantasy XV* in 2013.

Firstly the game no longer begins with the invasion by the empire of Niflheim. (Characters learn about it later on by reading it in the newspaper, instead of seeing it firsthand).

Secondly several rival or villain characters were scrapped or reworked. For example the character Stella was meant to be both a love interest

and rival to Noctis; Several trailers even teased her as a boss battle. She was replaced by a character who serves only as a love interest and takes a background role in the game.

Thirdly moral ambiguity was a central theme of the game. One of the first trailers even featured the famous Shakespeare quote, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Newer trailers make the game much more black and white; Noctis is simply taking back the kingdom of light from the evil empire.

These changes all serve to simplify the story and make its subject matter less heavy. While I preferred the darker tone, I can understand why these changes happened; The developer, Square Enix, needed to extend the game's demographic.

The director of *Final Fantasy XV*, Hajime Tabata, has expressed deep interest in making the game accessible to all players, even those who never thought about playing a *Final Fantasy* game before. I welcome this sentiment, because I hope this new entry in the series brings in new fans.

Despite the changes that I don't like, I'm still confident that this will be

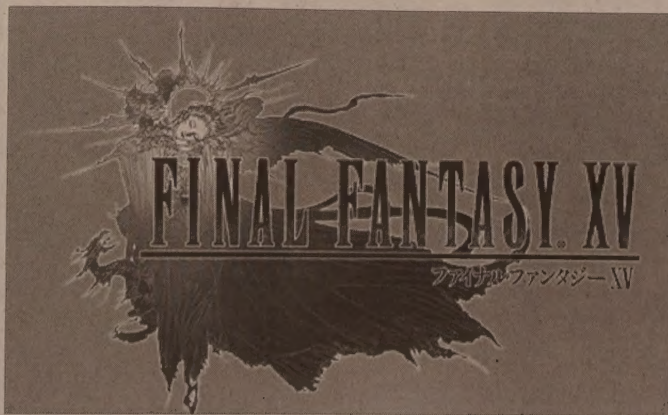
one of my favorite games when I get my hands on it over winter break. Most critics so far have reviewed the story as lackluster, and the storyline most likely would've been more intriguing had they retained the original concepts for the game.

However there are many more aspects of the game to enjoy. The graphics are gorgeous, the gameplay looks fresh and refined and the main cast of four friends has been left unchanged. The cast of characters still seems as lovable as it did in the old trailers.

There hasn't been a *Final Fantasy* game I've played that I've disliked; Even *Final Fantasy XIII*, which many fans criticize, was a game I deeply enjoyed.

I'm all for the success of *Final Fantasy XV*. I don't want it to be known as that game that took ten years to make and didn't live up to the hype. If this game isn't successful, then I may soon have to say goodbye to one of my favorite video game franchises, which is one of the things I want to happen least in this world.

So, with that being said, *Final Fantasy XV* is the game I'm most excited to finally play when I'm back home later this month.



PAX EAST 2015: FINAL FANTASY 15 DEMO/CC BY 2.0

The new Final Fantasy game tells the story of Noctis as he tries to reclaim his kingdom.



## VOICES

Here is the section where you can publish your unique thoughts, ideas and perspectives on life at Hopkins and beyond.

## Finals Horoscopes

### Aries

Just remember how smart you are, and you'll make it through this one.

### Taurus

You know you need to do that thing you've put off all week... but it can wait until after one more episode.

### Gemini

You missed your withdrawal date for that one class and now you've just got to hope you make it out with a C+.

### Cancer

You're the type of person to load a lot onto your plate at once, so plan accordingly.

### Leo

Don't stress out too much, you're going to be fine.

### Virgo

You basically live at Brody Café now so that you can have the quickest access to coffee of course.

### Libra

Everyone thinks you're fine because they don't see you in Brody at 4 a.m. because they've already gone home.

### Scorpio

Studying always comes first: You have a goal in mind whether that's money or the greater good, it's going to carry you through finals.

### Sagittarius

The stars all seem to be in your favor so don't even study. Especially if you're in the Linear Algebra and totally wrecking the curve.

### Capricorn

You don't need caffeine since you have peer pressure to keep you from turning your textbook into a pillow.

### Aquarius

You know, the stars can be wrong sometimes too. I wish you the best of luck.

### Pisces

People are going to be wanting your attention but just remember what's most important: your grades.

## The current state of the fast food nation



Amanda Auble  
Chief Notes

I'm just not hungry for chicken," I lied. My mother furrowed her brow in confusion and scooped the chicken Parmesan from my plate back into the pan, leaving behind a red sauce stain.

The casual refusals to consume each dinner's protein had continued to build up that summer. As a 16 year old unable to hide anything from my mother for longer than a week, I finally decided to reveal my dietary mission.

"Well, just don't try to convert me," my mother responded, claiming that her Italian-American upbringing on meatballs and sausage made her virtually impervious to vegetarianism. During my next two years living at home, the pan on the left stove burner — away from the rest of the meal — contained my alternative vegetarian dinners.

My argument at the dinner table that night wasn't without evidence. I attributed my sudden lifestyle revolution to Mr. Murphy's summer reading assignment: *Fast Food Nation*, the 2001 investigation by journalist Eric Schlosser.

Through its 10 chapters, including "Why the Fries Taste Good" and "The Most Dangerous Job," *Fast Food Nation* explores the people, places and past be-

hind America's industrialized food system.

"I'm interested in [fast food] both as a commodity and as a metaphor," Schlosser writes in his introduction. "A nation's diet can be more revealing than its art or literature."

I named the book as my motivation but attending a large high school and facing constant comparison to my twin sister, I was already looking for something that could solidify my individuality. With the nationwide health craze only just having started in 2012, vegetarianism provided me with that unique identity.

Schlosser's investigation on child-targeted marketing also hooked me. Less than 10 years before reading *Fast Food Nation*, I had been one of the children playing in the McDonald's ball pit and sitting next to Ronald McDonald on a Walmart bench while my mother waited in line to purchase a Happy Meal.

In middle school, my field hockey team ate at a fast food restaurant after every away game. I remember looking forward to purchasing a burger and milkshake with money from my parents more than playing the game itself. In a journalistic tone free from judgment, Schlosser revealed to me my already prolonged dependence on fast food.

Making my own personal sacrifice, I also felt like I was taking a step, if only indirectly, to boycott a system that oppressed the other Americans that Schlosser interviewed.

I wanted to help Regina Jones, a high school dropout and Taco Bell employee who worked 70 to 80 hours a week but was paid for only 40

and Kenny Dobbins, a Monfort slaughterhouse employee for almost 16 years who was fired despite sustaining countless work-related injuries like severely herniated disks, chemical burns, a broken leg, a shattered ankle and a massive heart attack.

Still continuing a meat-free diet today, I feel like a chorus of health-conscious crusaders now amplify Schlosser's once lone voice. From documentaries like Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me* (2004) to Robert Kenner's *Food, Inc.* (2008), a muckraking spirit has been channeled toward the American food industry.

*Fast Food Nation* today feels less like a groundbreaking infiltration and more like a document useful for pulling up historic statistics. Reading Schlosser's report again that states, "the Golden Arches are now more widely recognized than the Christian cross," my original frustration has transformed into a light laugh at such absurdity.

In his afterword, Schlosser himself is hopeful, predicting a depar-

ture from our reliance on industrialized food.

"This new century may bring an impatience with conformity," Schlosser writes, "a refusal to be kept in the dark, less greed, more compassion, less speed, more common sense, a sense of humor about brand essences and loyalties, a view of food as more than just fuel."

Although I still maintain a healthy skepticism for rebranding and continued food negligence, including McDonald's introduction of McCafé and Chipotle's recent *E. coli* outbreak, Schlosser's fast food nation feels like an empire in decline.

We have a long way to go, but food education is on the rise. Four the past eight years, even our country's first lady has championed healthy eating and exercise as a national priority.

Even though many reciprocal conversations and recipe swapping with fellow vegetarians has diminished my sense of uniqueness, I'm more satisfied by an enhanced sense of progress.



TEALAIUMENS/CC BY-SA 4.0

In his book, Eric Schlosser analyzes the world behind fast food.

## A playlist to ease you into the winter months



Juliana Veracka  
The Playlist

Well, we've nearly made it. A couple weeks and most of us will be finishing up our final exams and papers.

Some of us might be heading home for the holidays, some of us might not be. Whatever our post-semester plans might be, it's time for us to wind down and anticipate what will hopefully be at least a bit of a break. It's also just

about time to welcome a change of season — fall is rapidly turning into winter. It won't officially be winter until the end of the exam period, but we're already getting some of that crisp, wintry weather here in Baltimore and let's face it, it's the feeling that matters more than the official solstice.

So, in the hopes of easing everyone into break and colder weather, here are some tunes I thought you all might like. I hope you get through finals, enjoys any holidays you might be celebrating and are ready to usher in a new year. See you on the other side!

**1. "Winter" by Nieves:** A sad song, no doubt, but its title fits with the theme of this article obviously. It has a wintry feeling about it, as it should. If you're

looking for something mellow and melancholy to fit the mood of the cold weather, you're in for a real treat with this one.

**2. "Letters from the Sky" by Civil Twilight:** I love this one. It's got a bit of an epic feel to it but is soothing at the same time. I can see it being both a motivational song and a sort of relaxing, bittersweet listen.

**3. "To Build a Home" by The Cinematic Orchestra:** It's a long song, but it's got this bittersweet and also just plain sweet, longing sound that makes it wonderful to listen to on long bus rides. I particularly enjoy watching other cars through the window on my bus rides to and from Baltimore. A must-listen for anyone commuting home, I'd say.

**4. "Can't Pretend" by Tom Odell:** A really pretty love song with a bit of a darker sound to it. It feels almost cozy to me but with a dramatic edge. Cozy enough for winter, though? You be the judge.

**5. "Stray Italian Greyhound" by Vienna Teng:** A cutesy love song — well, more of a pining song. This one is really very sweet and for absolutely no reason at all makes me think of walking through New York City in the cold, which is why it made my list. Of

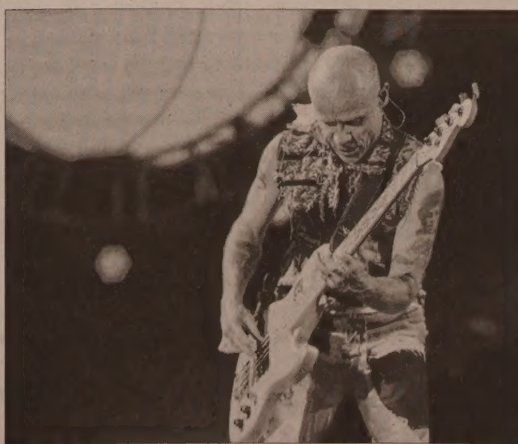
course, it's also just a really good song.

**6. "Snow (Hey Oh)" by Red Hot Chili Peppers:** Hey, look, another one with an obvious title. This song definitely feels like winter to me. It's not particularly about winter, but I feel it in the tune and in the references to snow. Even if you're going somewhere with a warm climate at the end of the semester, give it a listen.

**7. "On Your Side" by The Veronicas:** This is a new song that I just recently heard for the first time, and I loved it so I figured I'd put it on here. It might be a good song to listen to if you need support during exams.

**8. "Uprising" by Muse:** I love this song because it makes me feel rebellious but also motivated, so I thought it would be a good one for getting through exams as well. It's one of those "no one can tell me what to do!" songs that also make you want to do everything that you've been procrastinating.

**9. "Pure Morning" by Placebo:** I first listened to this song last winter, so now it naturally reminds me of this time of the year. For whatever reason, it makes me think of a gray, early winter morning and I quite enjoy that. I hope you do too.



SVEN MANDEL/CC BY-SA 4.0

The Red Hot Chili Peppers released the song "Snow (Hey Oh)" in 2006.



# the johns hopkins NEWS-LETTER

## Editorials

### We need to protect workers' rights at Hopkins

Last Thursday, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), along with labor unions Unite Here Local 7 and SEIU 32BJ, hosted a "Forum for Equality" a gathering where representatives from the various contract workers' unions on campus could share organizing strategies.

At the event, representatives of the security guards in our dorms and the workers in our cafeterias, who are not directly employed by the University and therefore do not have equal benefits, spoke about raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, job security and access to University housing grants.

The Editorial Board endorses the Fight for 15 movement on principle, but we recognize the difficulties in achieving this goal nation- and citywide. The current minimum wage in Maryland is \$8.75 per hour, above the federal minimum of \$7.25. By 2018, Maryland plans to raise the minimum to \$10.10. The Editorial Board recognizes that a \$15 minimum wage could overwhelm employers in Baltimore if rashly enacted, but that does not excuse paying workers low wages.

Our contract workers deserve a living wage. It is difficult to live healthily at current wages, and contract employees, even though the University does not directly employ them, should receive fair wages.

University President Ronald J. Daniels' compensation increased by \$1.5 million to over \$3 million total. Just his raise is enough to pay for 50 additional workers at \$30,000 per year. If our president can make \$3 million per year, why can't we pay our security guards or food service employees a living wage?

We recognize that it can be difficult to change longstanding policies, and that raising the minimum wage would eat into any company's profit margin. But worker's rights come first. Ensuring that parents can provide for their children should be a primary concern, not just an afterthought.

Many of the University's contract workers hold two or more jobs so they can support their families or themselves. Many of them work obscenely late into the night so that our campus is safe at all hours, and they should be compensated accordingly.

Hopkins employees, whether contract or directly employed, should eventually receive a \$15 per hour minimum wage. Johns Hopkins is the largest employer in Baltimore and Maryland, and its embrace of a \$15 minimum would set a powerful precedent.

This Forum for Equality was a tremendous step forward to creating real change in our community. It is incredible to see professors, students and contract workers all unite to discuss how they can improve workers' rights on campus. We commend the organizers for providing an opportunity for workers, faculty and students to come together.

Students should not be afraid to come to these events and learn more about the lives of the people who make this community what it is. Students need to show that they care and stand in solidarity with the workers who help improve our school every day.

We are the ones with the power to make change at Hopkins, and we have the responsibility to use our privilege to protect the people who keep us safe.

### Flash Seminars: liberating learning from the grade

Founded by two Hopkins seniors and inspired by an organization started at the University of Virginia, the new Flash Seminars strive to discuss academic ideas outside of the typical classroom setting. Each seminar invites a different professor to lead a group, capped at fifteen students, in a topic of the professor's choosing. Designed to explore intellectual thought, these seminars act as a one-time event to discuss topics ranging from physics to poetry.

With only a short reading assigned for the students to complete beforehand, Flash Seminars are a low pressure way for both professors and undergraduates to talk about and explore new ideas outside of their chosen major or profession. The events have been gaining more interest on campus since they began during the Spring 2015 semester. Hopkins students are passionate about academics, and most students relish learning outside their majors.

Flash seminars encourage free thought and conversations between students who otherwise may not interact in an academic setting. The undergraduate-run organization provides one of the few chances that an engineering student can have an open dialogue with a Writing Seminars major about race relations in society, for example.

These discussions can act as a way for

students to get out of their comfort zone and learn something completely new for an hour without worrying about the grade. Students are given the chance to learn what they want to learn and professors get to talk about their passions that may not fit into their traditional curriculum. Allowing professors to choose what they discuss and then placing them with fifteen students who actually want to be there will build a more close community across the University's undergraduate schools.

The intimate settings give professors a chance to step away from their traditional teaching methods. Many professors, especially in STEM fields, deliver lectures in large halls where student-faculty interaction is unfortunately limited.

Since each seminar follows a different topic and is led by a new professor, the diversity of topics possible is limitless. If a goal of our University is to facilitate open discussion and promote free learning, it should encourage Flash Seminars to grow.

Overall, the Editorial Board thinks that the seminars provide an excellent way to stimulate academic thought and discussion across campus. We hope Flash Seminars become popular enough to start occurring on a weekly basis and reach increasingly more students. Every student should make an effort attend one.

### Letter to the editor:

The News-Letter's recent articles about the International Studies Program ("Reviews Identity Flaws in International Studies Program," "Editorial: International Studies Must Better Support Its Students," 1 Dec) raise several valid points about the current state of one of campus' most popular majors.

As The News-Letter briefly noted, the International Studies Leadership Community (ISLC) was founded by the International Studies Program (ISP) precisely to address the several of the challenges identified. Working with the strong support of the Program and Director Dr. Sydney Van Morgan, the ISLC is focused on strengthening the sense of community in the major and providing opportunities outside of class for more in-depth discussions with faculty and other students.

The Editorial Board suggests soliciting

community. Unfortunately, this was an effort not fully explored in last week's coverage.

To any International Studies majors interested in adding to the discussion about the Program, just reach out to us — join us at one of our upcoming International Studies study breaks for hot chocolate (12/13 from 10 am to 1 pm), come to a speaker event, or contact us by email (listed below). We're always happy to talk and welcome feedback.

We look forward both to continued Newsletter coverage of ISLC and ISP events, and to working to ensure the Program speaks to the diversity of interests that make the International Studies community such a vibrant one.

Sincerely,

David Hamburger and Daniel Kim,  
ISLC Co-Chairs, 2016-17

## LETTERS & OP-ED POLICY

The News-Letter encourages letters to the editor and op-eds. The Johns Hopkins News-Letter reserves the sole right to edit all op-ed pieces and/or letters to the editor for space, grammar, clarity, accuracy and style. This applies to the body of the submission as well as its headline. Upon approval for publication, all op-eds and letters to the editor become property of The News-Letter. The News-Letter reserves the right to not publish any op-ed or letter to the editor for any reason, at the sole discretion of the Editors-in-Chief. Letters to the editor are limited to 250 words, must address content previously published in The News-Letter, and must include the author's name, address and phone number. Letters must be received by 5 p.m. Monday for inclusion in that week's issue; they should be sent to [chiefs@jhnewsletter.com](mailto:chiefs@jhnewsletter.com) (with "Letter to the editor" in the subject line) or the mailing address below. To write an op-ed, contact [opinions@jhnewsletter.com](mailto:opinions@jhnewsletter.com). Op-eds are not limited in their length except as available space may dictate. All submissions may be published online as well as in the paper, and no anonymous submissions will be accepted.

Submission of an op-ed and/or letter to the editor acknowledges your acceptance of and agreement to these policies. Any questions about these policies should be directed to the Editors-in-Chief of The News-Letter at [chiefs@jhnewsletter.com](mailto:chiefs@jhnewsletter.com).

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The Gatehouse.

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# OPINIONS

*With the exception of editorials, the opinions expressed here are those of the contributors. They are not necessarily those of The Johns Hopkins News-Letter.*

## Being faithful in college is essential to mental health

By SAMANTHA SETO

I open my eyes after listening to God.

As a child, I went with my mother to a small church to worship the Lord. I prayed every night as a little girl in the hope that my life would be spent knowing God's will for me. My walk of life with God has been a true gift of heart.

True believers, spiritual or religious people and those who consider themselves secular or perhaps an atheist are present worldwide. Institutions and universities that place religion in high regard have worship services and prayer groups for students, because religious faith and spiritual well-being is not always a priority and is often misunderstood.

The college organizations, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Hillel, have been around for decades. Religious organizations hold meetings for peers to talk and share their beliefs. Hopkins provides the Hopkins Christian Fellowship where I am a prayer team leader. I attend Bible study and prayer group.

I am passionate about the word of God. A plenitude of literature uses religion to thematically support the narrative. Norman Mailer's *The Gospel According to the Son* and Anne Rice's *The Young Messiah* are excellent books influenced by Christianity.

Milton's *Paradise Lost*, often taught in high schools and universities, invites readers to think about the epic, biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man. The classic work directly parallels the Books of Genesis and Revelations in the Bible.

I have published literature and art in many journals such as *The Harvard Ichthus*, *Yale Logos*, Brown University's *Cornerstone Magazine* and *The Hopkins Dialectic*. Not a day passes by that I don't think to honor my God. Every Sunday I sacrifice a part of my morning to devote to God. Every day I choose to reflect on God's power working in my life.

Although I have believed that God has walked with me all my life, I must confess that my life is by no means perfect. I have suffered from heartbreak and recognize the real pain and hardship of social relations. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a relationship as "the way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected." Colleagues, acquaintances, family, friends and intimate lovers are distinct in their own way.

I have not always felt that God has been present all my life due to the fact that I believe I do not have successful relationships. In the summer of 2014, I was raped and sexually abused by someone who I honestly do not know at all.

I imagine it could be worse if I had a miscarriage or an abortion, which brings about a "right to life" issue in America, but I simply tolerate people who abuse me with their acts and mean words all the time. I do not impose self-victimization on myself, but every time I hear a mean voice, I assume it's purposely bullying me.

One of the basic needs in a person's life is a sense of love and belonging. Humans are naturally social creatures. Yet, God presents social differences that give rise to prejudice and hate toward some people — look at the Holocaust and the American Civil War. Consider the cliché phrase, "stranger danger." It is very hard to get by without connecting with anyone. Similar to Martin Lu-

ther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech, my wish is that all people might get along well.

Taking a moment to reflect on religion brings a sense of joy and reminds me to be thankful. As a transfer student at Hopkins, I took a Near Eastern Studies course titled *Prophecy in the Bible*. It welcomed me to learn more about religion. I am thankful for a good professor, Theodore Lewis, who was awarded the 2016 Excellence in Faculty Graduate Teaching and Mentoring Award sponsored by the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences.

The historical roots of religion are important to understanding why people believe in God. The early history of laws, prophets and covenants create a stepping stone. A Wake Forest University professor, Leann Pace, beautifully taught an introduction to the major religions, which sparked my curiosity in world issues like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Also World Religion Day is the third Sunday in January of each year and is intended to celebrate interfaith across nations. Besides my own religion that divides into complex branches, all people must have respect for international religions.

One summer I worked at a Duke program, and I went to a synagogue with my best friend, Rachel. I learned to read Hebrew in a prayer book and sang Jewish chants aloud. She also invited me to her Passover Seder. I learned about Judaism by reading a passage from a children's book that alludes to the Exodus in the Old Testament when Moses goes down to Egypt to save God's chosen people.

People in this world live to discover meaning and purpose. Having faith allows me to keep a good heart and mind. I live for the Creator and Maker of all things, who I know to be God.

*Samantha Seto is a senior Writing Seminars major from Washington, D.C.*

## Students must stay inspired post-election

By GILLIAN LELCHUK

Following the presidential election, Hopkins students seem to have forgotten the apathy that typically characterizes them. Students have participated in protests against hate, fossil fuels, the review of the Humanities Center and so much more. All of this is great, but we can't let it fizzle out.

I imagine that most leftists, when the shock of a Trump presidency wears off, will return to the usual focus on their studies, internships and grad school applications — everything that stole our attention before what *The News-Letter* affectionately refers to as "the week of protests."

We cannot let this happen. We have to care, we have to stay motivated, and we have to actively work to improve our community. Even if you weren't upset by the outcome of the presidential election, you need to care about this world, your world. Change starts small, so let's start it here at Hopkins.

As the week of protests proves, Hopkins is already home to a number of groups that fight for important causes. Groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Refuel Our Future work year-round to improve our community. If you were inspired last month, hang onto that feeling and get involved on campus.

Maybe your interests aren't so political. Maybe you don't see a need to change the social climate of our university. Good news: Groups like Relay for Life and Dance Marathon raise money for cancer research and the Johns Hopkins Children's Center, respectively. Give back and have fun, all



IRACAZ/CC BY-SA 3.0

Students seem to have time to lounge around the Beach, but not to sign a petition.

while staying out of politics.

The world is bigger than you. Some people don't have enough money to buy food for their families, and you spend four dollars on a cup of coffee at Brody. Simply by attending this school, you have the opportunity to help those who aren't as privileged as you.

Volunteer your time or your money, or at the very least, ask your friends and family to.

In my experience, Hopkins students are incredibly self-absorbed. I asked over 20 students to participate in Dance Marathon last month or, at the very least, to donate to my page.

Guess how many of the people I talked to came. One. Guess how many of them donated. Two.

A few weeks ago, I was working on my homework in Brody Café, and a grad student was walking through talking to people about the potential closing of the Humanities Center, asking people to sign the petition. Once she was out of earshot, the two boys at

the table next to me laughed about it. They were engineers. It didn't affect them, so they didn't care.

Again, the world is bigger than you. I understand that you're busy. I'm busy, too. It's Hopkins, we're all busy. But please. Please. Do something to make this world better.

Join DSAGA, Hopkins Feminists, Voice for Choice — or Life, if that's what you believe and care about. Participate in Relay for Life, and buy donuts from the next group that's going to donate their proceeds to a cause.

Add your voice to *The News-Letter* or *Her Campus* or your blog. Ask your grandparents to make a donation to your favorite cause as part of your Christmas present. Take five seconds to add your name to a petition.

If you can wake up each morning and go to class and to lacrosse practice or chapter meeting or dance rehearsal or whatever it is you do — if you can wake up and make that your whole day, knowing the suffering that exists in the world, then that's on you.

*Gillian Lechuk is a junior Writing Seminars and Mathematics double major from Los Alamitos, Calif. She is the Opinions Editor.*

## The skills learned at Hopkins apply to Teach for America

By ZELPHA WILLIAMS

So, Zelpha, what are your plans after graduation?" We all know that dreaded question.

I've been avoiding graduation for four long years. There are countless things I'll miss — Spring Fair, Lighting of the Quads, even the chaos of picking new classes every semester. Now, as family members prod about my plans, my anxiety has finally dwindled. I can proudly answer that I'm going back to school, but this time as the teacher.

At Hopkins, I've kept myself busy as a political science major, Multicultural Student Volunteers Executive Board member and sister of Pi Beta Phi. I've always planned on going to

law school after graduation. It wasn't until I started working at the Public Defender's Office and interacting with our clients that I began to realize how many aren't given the same opportunities I had. I started to see the systemic injustices in this country up close and how powerful a quality education can be.

Hopkins gave me the opportunity to take challenging classes and surround myself with people and activities that pushed my thinking. I want to continue to push myself out of my comfort zone after I graduate. I want to jump headfirst into a career that will give me an opportunity to have an immediate impact. That's why I've chosen to become a high school teacher in Massachusetts with Teach For America.

I believe that a classroom is a powerful place for social change. When I think about the social issues I'm most passionate about, from social policy, immigration and voting rights to feminism, I came to realize that there's no better place to tackle them head-on than in the classroom. After all, education is the most powerful tool at our disposal to disrupt inequity and create opportunity.

As a corps member, I know I'll face incredible challenges as I tackle these complex and systemic issues. But I also know that my experiences on campus... have equipped me to take on these obstacles on behalf of my students. And

if not me, then who?

I look forward to creating a community full of pride and school spirit with my students, and I can't wait to bring what I've learned here into my classroom.

**I know that my experiences on campus... have equipped me to take on these obstacles on behalf of my students.**

I can't wait to teach an entire classroom how to "Embrace the S." When I think about the things I love most about being on this campus, I realize I can take so much of those experiences with me.

I'm excited to step out of our now-comfortable lecture halls, labs and coffee shops to start my path as a leader in a different kind of classroom — one where I'll get to impact the lives of the next generation as their teacher. A classroom where I'll have the opportunity to make a positive change in a community I'll call my new home.

So as you consider which path you'll forge after graduation, I encourage you to step out of your comfort zone. We all have to leave Hopkins someday, but I can think of no greater privilege than helping the next generation of students have the opportunity to become Blue Jays.

*Zelpha Williams is a senior Political Science major and a 2017 Teach For America-Massachusetts corps member.*



BRIAN FINKE, LILY MERCOGLIANO/CC BY-SA 4.0

As a member of Teach for America, Williams will have the opportunity to change the lives of students.

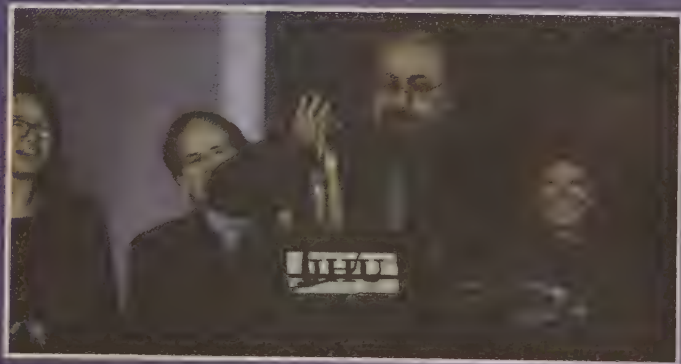


# PHOTO ESSAY



## LIGHTING OF THE QUADS

By KAREEM OSMAN





# THE B SECTION

YOUR WEEKEND • ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT • CARTOONS, ETC. • SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY • SPORTS

DECEMBER 8, 2016

## Arts & Entertainment

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## Sports

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 College football selection committee is unsatisfactory — B12



# YOUR WEEKEND DECEMBER 8-11

## Events in Baltimore 70 years later, Miracle on 34th Street thrives this weekend

### Thursday

#### Queerology Goth Ball, The Crown, 7 p.m.

Queerology returns to the Crown this Thursday and will feature a film showing from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., LGBTQ friendly DJs and live performances. Goth fans and music lovers alike will find something to enjoy! \$5 before 10 p.m., \$10 after.

### Friday

#### Island of Misfit Tapes, Atomic Books, 7 p.m. — 10 p.m.

Come enjoy five Christmas TV Specials on VHS projected in Eightbar, the bar in the back of Atomic Books in Hampden. No listed cover.

#### Loop Dreams II, The Crown, 9 p.m.

Loop Dreams will feature technically skilled femme, non-binary and queer DJs, curated by DJ Trillnated. \$5

### Saturday

#### Fifth Annual Post Typography Print & Poster Sale, Post Typography, 12 p.m. — 4 p.m.

Post Typography will open their studio for a one-day-only print and ephemera sale this Saturday! Items such as prints, posters, books, music and apparel will be for sale.

#### Fourth Annual Art Market, Current Space, 12 p.m. — 6 p.m.

Need to buy gifts for the holidays? Come buy directly from local artists. You can meet the person behind the work you are buying and support creative folk here in Baltimore!

#### About Face Exhibition Opening, Creative Alliance, 6 p.m. — 8 p.m.

This exhibition will feature work by Amy Sherald, Rozeal, Tim Okamura and Ebony Patterson. Each artist tackles stereotypes of race in different ways, such as painting subjects' skin in grayscale and dressing them in a manner contradictory to racial stereotypes, addressing black face in Japanese culture through paintings, multimedia tapestries and more. Free.

### Sunday

#### BMORE Creative Winter Fair, Metro Gallery, 12 p.m. — 5 p.m.

Couldn't make any of the Saturday sales or the gallery opening? Swing by this event featuring all the arts and crafts your heart could desire, along with live music and artisan food. Free hot cider, no cover.

By HANNAH MELTON  
For The News-Letter

We live a mile away from one of the most festive blocks in America. Come December, the residents of 34th Street in Hampden step into their roles as holiday extraordinaires and plug in their twinkle lights. But we aren't talking about some regular string of bulbs across the gutter: 34th Street turns into a holiday wonderland, with more lights than you'd see in a neighborhood, let alone a single block.

The Miracle on 34th Street is a tradition that is now entering its 70th year. Residents of the 700 block of 34th Street, between Keswick and Chestnut Avenues, create intricate light displays for the public to enjoy. It features several classic homes that seniors are very familiar with and freshman will grow to love. Impressively, residents are not bound by any sort of contract or agreement to decorate. It's probably safe to assume that, Christmas spirit aside, they keep to the status quo to avoid eternal shaming from their neighbors.

Houses on 34th range from flashy Disney displays to mellow Peace themes. Above the street, lights are strung between houses, creating a canopy of artificial stars.

The Peace household is draped in blue lights



COURTESY OF HANNAH MELTON. SNEAKERDOG/CC-BY-2.0  
Hopkins students pose, the hubcap tree shines at sunset and the crab house twinkles brightly.

and international flags. Like many of the homes, it is non-denominational, a nice contrast to the nativity scenes that so often populate the average holiday decor.

The Hubcap House sports snowmen made of bicycle tires and a giant silver Christmas tree built of — you guessed it — hubcaps. This home screams environmentally aware, with fewer lights and a focus on creative reuse of materials.

Across the street is the ever-popular Natty Boh home. The deck is titled with a sign reading "From the House of Pleasant Living" with Mr. and Mrs. Boh lit up beneath. Who knew the frat-party favorite could be made so classy?

At the end of the street is the Crab House: a large crustacean hangs over the porch, created with an all-red string

of lights. It's a prime spot for that "Hey, I go to school in Baltimore!" picture. Your mom will love it.

The other great photo opportunity is just across the road on the other side. This is the Disney house, aggressively lit and chock-full of figurines. Windows are lined with stuffed animals in a cute (but borderline creepy) display, complete with snow. But it has a nice arch at the end of the walkway with a lit up "Merry Christmas" sign at the top. Plenty of kind strangers will be milling about should you need a friendly photographer.

34th Street draws thousands of visitors each year who come out to enjoy a concentrated dose of Christmas and holiday cheer. And a trip to Hampden is never wasted. There's plenty to do before

or after you see the lights. A trip past the Charmery for a hot chocolate featuring their homemade marshmallows is a must. Huge and square, they easily justify the sugar hit. Stroll down the avenue and stop into the boutiques to do a little Christmas shopping. Trohv sells many quirky gifts to fit the season, including uniquely Baltimore products like Kinderhook cookies.

It's easy to get caught up in the craze of Hopkins even when the holidays roll around. Yes, you could spend every evening doing work or pretending to do work or partaking in "alternative" activities in an attempt to forget about your work. This December, take some time to be kind to yourself. Start a tradition, and enjoy the hectic happiness that millions of tiny twinkle lights bring.

## BAMF Café offers nostalgic Saturday-morning vibes

By VERONICA REARDON  
Your Weekend Editor

If you like Station North, you've probably been to Red Emma's. It's a great place, offering an inclusive community space that values intellectual curiosity and offers delicious vegan food. However, if you're anything like as distractible as I am, you've probably also realized that Red Emma's may not be the best choice for studying.

It has many assets: It attracts people from all walks of life, and its status as an open space for public education makes for great conversation. Yet it can be difficult to work there, even if you have a good set of headphones. As someone who likes to do "exploratory studying," aka studying in as many different places as possible in an attempt to get yourself excited about schoolwork, I needed a solution.

BAMF Café was an option I explored. It's only been in Station North for about a year. I only discovered it because a friend who's a comic buff mentioned it to me.

One of the first things you notice when you walk in the door is all the cutouts of characters. Last time I went, they had Spike from Buffy the Vampire Slayer up. Luke and R2D2 are always there. The bar they serve coffee from is a really

cool looking antique wood, with stained glass behind it reading "TEA" and "COFFEE." It's covered in figurines and decorations from comics, movies and TV.

BAMF is also maybe the best-smelling coffee shop I've ever entered. This is due to their hazelnut coffee, which fills the entire place with a wonderful smell. The feel is homey and warm, like Saturday morning when you're little and your parents let you watch cartoons.

There's a TV behind the bar that plays classics like X-Men cartoons and Scooby Doo, which contributes to the Saturday-morning feel, and the shop has a selection of board games, cards and comics for patrons to enjoy.

Their food is good too! I typically go for the Groot bagel, which is a toasted bagel with cream cheese, sprouts, sriracha and carrots, but they have a whole host of items besides that, mainly different lunch items and snacks. Everything I have tried is tasty, and all of their items are named after characters and the like from cult TV shows and books. Many of their options are vegan or vegetarian as well, for those of you with dietary restrictions. Prices are extremely reasonable — the Groot is under \$4, I believe.

Events BAMF hosts have included group viewings of episode premieres of RuPaul's Drag



PHOTO COURTESY OF VERONICA REARDON  
BAMF cafe shows holiday spirit while displaying a Dalek in the window.

Race and movie marathons. On May 4, they had Star Wars day, because you can't be a geek haven without May the Fourth jokes.

They're on Facebook, so you can check out their page for future events. If you go there to study or just to chill with a comic book, you can look at their chalk board to see what's up.

What does the acronym stand for, you ask? Shouldn't this place be, I don't know, hard core? The answer is no. The owner actually intended BAMF to stand for Books, Action figures,

Movies, and Friends. Yes, it's very sweet.

BAMF is located on North Charles Street, between Lafayette and North Avenue, and is easy to get to. It's a ten minute bike ride or JHMI ride away. The bike lock out front is a little janky so if you bike, maybe lock up down the street, and make sure you use a U lock. Don't lock to a sign — people can remove the sign and pull your bike up off the top. You can also walk if you want (I wouldn't in this weather), about 20 minutes to a half an hour up North Charles Street toward Penn Station.



# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## Iconic video sharing app Vine rests in peace

By JACOB TOOK  
For The News-Letter

Of all that's happened in 2016, it would probably be over-the-top to say that the most hard-hitting tragedy has been the death of beloved video sharing app Vine. However, because of the app's pervasive influence on popular culture over the last few years, its departure marks a significant loss for the world of arts and entertainment.

For those of you who don't know, I'll explain a bit about what Vine is (or was) and how it met its grisly end.

Vine is an app that allows users to post video clips limited to six seconds. The founders initially imagined a casual "lifecasting" service along the lines of what Snapchat has become, but aspects of Vine, particularly the time limit, encouraged users to experiment creatively with the platform.

A selection of users rose to stardom because of the consistent humor and quality of their Vines as they pushed the limits of what they could do with just six seconds of content. The app became dependent on this oligarchy of its top producers, which is dangerous enough, but its failure to incentivize continued creation from this elite led to decreased market interest and traffic.

Other platforms that



LUISJBOADA/CC-BY-SA-4.0

A Vine featuring Denzel Curry's "Ultimate" popularized the use of these pixelated glasses in memes.

depend on "talent" from their users, such as YouTube, have programs to compensate their top creators. To its leading stars, Vine's competitor platforms, which also included Instagram and Facebook, offered more profitable options for continued use.

Because of this, most articles about Vine's decline and eventual death end in a grim warning about the danger of building a franchise that relies on the individual creative expression of a few individuals.

However, I am personally thankful that Vine has provided this platform. Despite the problems with its economic model (thanks capitalism), Vine spawned

more memes and other cultural phenomena than any other social media platform with only a fraction of the users.

The most captivating part of Vine's life story is that most of these memes and other iconic Vines didn't originate from the Vine A-list. The nature of Vine allowed a single video clip to explode with popularity in a short amount of time, leading to the birth of such exemplary memes as "damn Daniel" and "what are those?"

There are distinct genres of Vine, the largest of which is comedy, but this category can itself be divided further between scripted Vines that are intentionally funny and some apparently accidental or unlikely moments.

The one-hit-wonder Vines typically come from the latter group, as what makes them special is their ability to capture an improbable moment of hilarity. Some overlap would occur, of course, when consistent Viners referred to current trends on the app, but regular creators usually rose to stardom because of a distinct style that set them apart from their peers.

For example, popular creator Thomas Sanders gained recognition for Vines in which he narrates the lives of ordinary people, relying on his subjects' amusing reactions. Viner King Bach, who has the most followers of any user, said in an interview that he paid attention to what users found funny and reflected his observations in his uploads.

Inexplicably, the second most-followed Viner is Nash Grier, a talentless man-child who somehow built a fanbase around his

ignorant and unamusing Vines that are at best boring and at worst vomit-inducing.

My point is this: Vine had a lot to offer. "Vine edits" are a trendy if niche way to gain popularity by making six-second mashups of characters or shows. A large contingent of top Viners primarily post musical clips that feature singing, dancing or playing an instrument.

And yet, the most popular Viners are those who experimented with the limitations of the medium to create comedy that is as effortless or precise as they like, whether with a simple punchline or sight gag or by creating an elaborate scene with acting, costumes and props.

Part of Vine's value lay in how easy it was for anyone to become Vine-famous if they posted regular, entertaining content. The massive range of styles open to Viners allowed rising users to forge their own space for creation, rather than having to compete in a fierce pool of other creators racing to produce the most entertaining content first.

Ultimately, Vine proved to be an experiment in the creation of modern art that was culturally successful but economically unsustainable. Although most of its creators have already moved to alternative mediums, it is unlikely that anything will ever quite replaced the unique venue of creation that the app provided.

I know that Vine is perhaps not the most devastating loss we've faced in the last year, but I'll be sure to add it to the list of things for which I hold a remembrance on New Year's Eve.

## The top five rap releases of the year

By NIKITA  
SHTARKMAN  
For The News-Letter

This past week, the arts section of *The News-Letter* convened to create our list of the Top Five albums in three different fields. These are our Top Five Rap albums of 2016.

### 5. Campaign by Ty Dolla \$ign

This is one of the most fun, well-produced projects of this year. Ty Dolla \$ign seems to magically and effortlessly consistently make pleasant, catchy music that never gets old. While the lyrics are often hedonistic, empty and braggadocious, they sound great when he sings them in his melodic voice. By the end of the album, you somehow feel uplifted.

The production on *Campaign* is phenomenal, with rattling high hats, perfectly harmonizing instrumentation and trunk-rattling bass-lines. Songs like "Campaign," "Zaddy" and "Watching" always cause the same reaction: first the crack of a smile, then your body starts to relax and finally, your head starts to bob, while you mouth the hook. But Dolla isn't all fun and games on this record. The song "No Justice," with TC, Dolla's brother who is serving a life sentence in jail, tackles the heavy topic of racism and injustice.

It is a beautiful moment, when Ty's glazed and detached character breaks down, and some serious passion shines through. He croons the hook: "Ain't no justice for the brothers," with genuine feeling.

### 4. DC44 by Meek Mill

"Momma ain't stressin' she know that its all good / My Number one goal is to get her out the hood" are the opening bars of deceased rapper, Lil Snupe's, verse on DC4's final track "Outro."

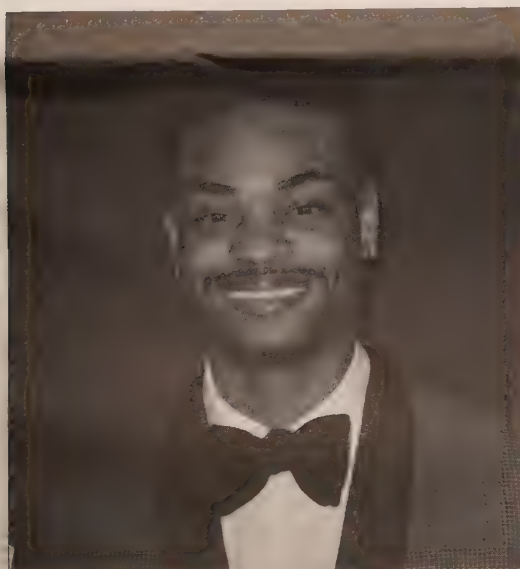
Post-probation, post-beef, post-memes, Meek Mill dropped the next entry in the *Dreamchasers* series, DC4. It is a fitting entry into the long lineage of great *Dreamchasers* projects. Meek crafts fourteen diverse and impressive tracks, riding over a wide range of incredible instrumentals. The album hits like a gust of wind or the splash of an unexpected wave.

"On The Regular," the first song, is another emblematic Meek Mill intro. It starts quiet and unassuming, before slapping you across the face with quick-fire lyricism and kick drums. Songs like "Blue Notes" and "Lights Out" are undeniable masterpieces, with impressive verses over an eclectic collection of banging beats.

Tory Lanez' explosion on "Litty," was one of the highlights of the year, the song already burning hot before he jumps on it. Although there are a few missteps throughout the project (Lil Uzi Vert's wailing voice on "Froze" is the *marquis* example), they are quickly forgotten behind the flood of impressive and beautiful set pieces.

Meek blasts past the high expectations of his fans, with his legs hanging out of his gleaming Maybach, wearing his often mentioned Rolex. Drake

SEE RAP, PAGE B5



LUISJBOADA/CC-BY-SA-4.0

Andrew "King Bach" Bachelor is the most followed user on Vine.

## Supersonic pulls back the curtain on Oasis

By KATHERINE  
LOGAN  
For The News-Letter

Equally as known for their wild antics and rocky relationships with one another as for their music, the band Oasis firmly established their place in rock history in the '90s with songs including "Champagne Supernova," "Supersonic," "Wonderwall" and "Don't Look Back in Anger." Directed by Mat Whitecross and produced by Asaf Kapadia of the critically-acclaimed documentary about Amy Winehouse, *Amy*, *Oasis: Supersonic* sheds light on the band's origins, tracking their lightning fast rise without shying away from their less favorable attributes.

The film is framed

by footage of Oasis' headlining show at the Knebworth Festival in the U.K., which a record-breaking 250,000 people attended, with 2.6 million applying for tickets.

What makes such numbers extraordinary is that this was just roughly two years after Oasis's debut on the scene. Even in relatively early footage of the band rehearsing, they all agree that they're bound to be the best and biggest rock band in the world. Now, it would be easy to characterize the Gallagher's words as pure idiotic arrogance, yet there's something prescient about them. Also, anyone pursuing a creative endeavor can relate to the notion of having to will oneself to believe that they have what it

SEE OASIS, PAGE B5

## Bleed For This tells inspiring tale of perseverance

By DUBRAY KINNEY  
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Towards the end of *Bleed For This*, a 2016 biopic focusing on the car accident and recovery of '90s boxing champion Vinny Paz (played by Miles Teller), his cornerman and coach Kevin Rooney (played wonderfully by Aaron Eckhart) gives him a speech that is cut over a montage of Paz working to get back into the ring.

"We started in a basement!" shouts Rooney as shots of Teller struggling to bench press with the Halo brace screwed into his skull, the only sound being that of fists hitting training gloves.

This sequence proved

to show the greatest strength of the film, its editing and use of sound.

To backtrack however, *Bleed For This* follows the rise of (then) former Lightweight champion Vinny Paz whose career is in a downturn. He's linked up with Mike Tyson's former trainer, Kevin Rooney, who was known to have a persistent drinking problem. In the first training sessions with Rooney, he tells Paz to bump up all the way to Light Middleweight (and eventually Super Welterweight) due to Paz's struggles with maintaining his fighting weight.

The switch in weight classes sees success for Paz that is tragically cut

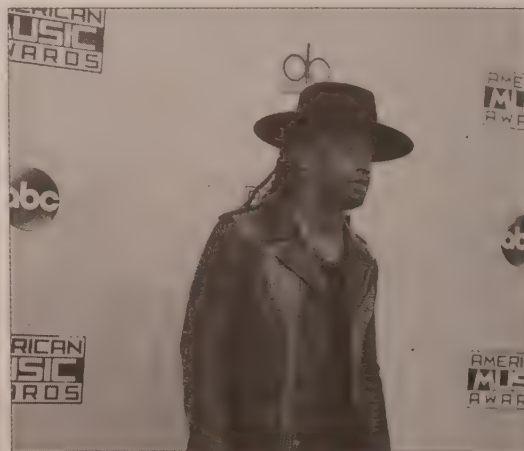
short by a car accident that injures his spine. What follows is Paz's choice to undergo a medical procedure which allows for him to still have the opportunity to box if his recovery process of six months goes well, but at worst it would result in Paz never being able to walk again.

Perhaps it's telling of how immersive the role was, or maybe how little I've seen of Vinny Paz, that I can say that I associate Vinny with Miles Teller following the viewing of this film. His portrayal didn't leave much room for character as Vinny was a strong personality to begin with. He was known as a smart-aleck from his

numerous pre-fight press conferences as well as a raging bull in the ring, as prone to punch himself (in an effort to pump himself up) as he was to cave in the face of his opponents.

Coming out of the film, the weakest part of it had to be its female characters. The women in the film don't serve as much more than background pieces to further the story of Paz, or show the backstory of his family life. His girlfriends are shown to be shallow and static characters.

All in all, *Bleed for This*, fails where more successful 2010 boxing films like *Creed* succeed yet still makes for an enjoyable watch.



DISNEY/ABC TELEVISION GROUP/CC-BY-ND-2.0

Ty Dolla \$ign starts off our list of the Top Five Rap Albums of 2016.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Angel Olsen tops 2016's strong indie releases



FRED VON LOHMANN/CCO-1.0  
Angel Olsen's released our 2016 Indie/Rock Album of the Year, with *My Woman*.

By WILL KIRSCH  
Staff Writer

This past week, the arts section of *The News-Letter* convened to create our list of the Top Five albums in three different fields. These are our Top Five Indie/Rock albums of 2016.

5. *Zone* by JEFF the Brotherhood

My roommate is named Jeff, but he has not put out any albums lately, so this won't be a review of him. *Zone* is, for me, the best album on this list, largely because it is the most punk. That is not to say this is some sort of grindcore power violence, ear-blistering saga of rage. *Zone* uses a lot of chunky riffs, heavy bass and hard drums, especially in songs like "Roachin'" and "Bad," but it is not a one-dimensional album in any sense. The vocals switch styles and even genders on certain occasions — the songs range from a head-banger's delight to more mellow ballads.

Although ballads might not be the right word because this album does not involve singing as much as it does talking, Jake Orall delivers more speeches over the instruments than actually singing. Strangely though, it works. The contrast between a flat monotone and heavy, somewhat aggressive instrumentalism has psychedelic effects.

It is a strange compromise between energy and lethargy. A comparable sensation would be when one is intoxicated and has a sudden moment of clarity — all the spinning, noise and blurring colors assaulting your dilated pupils cease and you are left with a sort of poetic realization of humanity. Alternatively, *Zone* is just some good punk-rock.

4. *Human Performance* by Parquet Courts

Full disclosure: there are three albums on this list which I had yet to hear before this weekend. This is the first. That's my *Human Performance*, although I do already like this band. Parquet Courts' sound is reminiscent of the post and proto-punk bands like Television, Johnathan Richman's *Modern Lovers* and Wire. Their style

is pared-down and simple, relying on the core three instruments responsible for most great rock.

What makes Parquet Courts really unique is, for me, their lyrics. Vocalists Andrew Savage and Austin Brown deliver a kind of Jack Kerouac-esque songwriting which leans heavily towards the abstract while still conjuring up evocative imagery. For example, in *Human Performance's* "Captive of the Sun," part of the chorus is, "melody abandoned in the key of New York." Does that make absolutely clear sense? No, it does not but it is quite beautiful. Their music has a hint of sadness but is fun for the most part.

It really speaks to the millennial ennui of, "my life is boring but I am content in that boredom." In the most superficial terms, it is unremarkable but even a brief examination will reveal its beauty.

3. *22, A Million* by Bon Iver

Apparently they have sampling technology in Wisconsin now, because Bon Iver has made significant use of it in their latest album *22, A Million*. This album is the second of the three which I have only recently heard, which is odd because Bon Iver is a pretty big deal. My ignorance may have something to do with the fact that *22, A Million* seems to be something of a departure for the folk ensemble.

Justin Vernon has apparently been sipping on the Kanye juice and as a result, *22, A Million* sounds as though it had been recorded with instruments made of space minerals. It is also incorporates electronic elements like drum machines, although presumably since this is a folk band their 808 was hand-carved out of wood.

Joking aside, this is a very good album; it feels emotionally rich — an oddly melodic cacophony of production and instrumentalism plus Vernon's very pleasant voice. Weirdly, listening to this album gave me a good idea of what it feels like to be a bird. Something about its melodies, especially in "22, (Over Soon)," defies gravity, floats on air and is in control without seeming so.

2. *Blackstar* by David Bowie

Damn, rest-in-peace to the last great Martian and a man who was clearly not of this Earth. David Bowie did not actually die; He merely returned to his home planet in a blaze of light

like E.T. Bowie set a lot of precedents in respect to contemporary music, and with his most recent and final contribution to the musical canon, he pretty successfully upset all of those precedents.

This album is arguably a lot of things: rock, jazz and electronica, Bowie essentially made the full lap before his death. He solicited the help of a jazz ensemble led by Donny McCaslin, who effectively push the limits of genres while Bowie's beautifully out-of-tune voice laments his own impending death from a illness which was hidden from the public until he died, two days after *Blackstar* was released.

I'm not going to sit here and tell you that this album is an easy listen. Certain songs, especially "Sue," for me, are pretty bizarre. Actually, they are all bizarre, but as a final statement by

someone who pushed the boundaries of music for nearly half a century, what else did you expect? Watch down upon us, Starman.

1. *My Woman* by Angel Olsen

*My Woman* is the third and final album that I entered as a newcomer, as well as the Arts Section of *The News-Letter's* Rock/Indie Album of the Year. *My Woman* is Olsen's third full album since her 2011 solo debut and is a follow up to 2014's critically acclaimed *Burn Your Fire for No Witness*.

All in all, this latest release is a pretty dope piece of music. It combines Olsen's stunning voice with a sort of jangling, reverberant surf-guitar sound, giving the album the vibe of something that could soundtrack the spectral afterlife. That being said, this album is not a cry-tour. It ranges from catchy, upbeat riffs on "Shut Up Kiss Me" and "Give It Up" and more dour synthy dirges on "Intern," as well as most of the spectrum in between.

Most of *My Woman* meets in the middle, accenting Olsen's haunting and simple voice with loose, pick-heavy strumming. *My Woman* is the sort of album that is equally appropriate for a modest bout of head-banging or an episode of crying gently on your apartment's dirty, bleakly off-color carpet. To sum up, this is a really good pseudo-surf, alt-rock album that will make you miss your ex.

Some key songs to take away from this release are, "Intern," "Woman" and "Shut Up Kiss Me."

Honorable Mentions

By the Arts & Entertainment Staff

The *News-Letter's* Arts & Entertainment staff gathered last week to discuss the best albums of 2016. It was a long, contentious debate to say the least. Several albums' omission in the finalized list reviled some of us, and thus we give you: The Honorable Mentions.

Kendrick Lamar — *Untitled Unmastered*

The Avalanches — *Wildflower*

Deakin — *Sleep Cycle*

Death Grips — *Bottomless Pit*

Pinkshinyultrablaster — *Grandfeathered*

Schoolboy Q — *Blank Face LP*

Preoccupations — *Preoccupations*

Solange crafts our Pop Album of the Year

By JACOB TOOK  
For *The News-Letter*

This past week, the arts section of *The News-Letter* convened to create our list of the Top Five albums in three different fields. These are our Top Five Pop albums of 2016.

5. *Blonde* by Frank Ocean

*Blonde* is only the second studio album from acclaimed R&B singer and producer Frank Ocean, who shot to stardom with his breakout mixtape *Nostalgia, Ultra* and first album *Channel Orange* in 2011 and 2012, respectively. It was released amidst fantastic anticipation after Ocean notoriously teased the completion of a project thought to be titled "Boys Don't Cry" in the summer of 2015, and most critics agree that it more than lives up to the hype.

The album's lead single and opener, "Nikes," is a psychedelic, dreamy track that sets up the album's cohesive sound. Ocean's album is a gorgeously raw musical experience, narrated by the artist's expressive vocals and accompanied by an entrancing musical backdrop that is mellow and hints at melancholy behind the lyrics. *Blonde* is a standout musical experience because of its superb artistry and the emotional weight carried by each track.

4. *Freetown Sound* by Blood Orange

*Freetown Sound* marks

the third release by British songwriter and producer Dev Hynes recording under the name Blood Orange. It is a complex album with a heavy, grounded sound that is precisely produced, incorporating elements of jazz, '80s dance and R&B. Hynes lends his name to all 17 of the album's tracks as a composer, but features a range of guest musicians such as Debbie Harry, Nelly Furtado and Carly Rae Jepsen.

It is an album about identity. Hynes posted a message on his Instagram alongside the announcement of the its release date indicating that the album would address the intersection of black and queer identity. The opener, "By Ourselves," samples a slam poem performed by Ashlee Haze regarding feminism for African American women, and the track "Hands Up" includes audio of protestors chanting "hands up / don't shoot." However, it's Hynes's vocals that tie these different voices together, as he often broods on history but also expresses optimism for a better future.

3. 99.9% by Kaytranada

Kaytranada has made a name for himself with a number of mixtapes and extended plays, but 99.9% is the Haitian-Canadian producer's debut studio album. An upbeat tempo ties this album together as it experiments

with blending R&B and electronica influences beneath a host of guest vocalists and instrumentalists. Despite the quick, danceable tracks, the album maintains a dreamy sound that is reflected in its precise production. 99.9% has been well-received by critics, who praised the artist's ability to combine and experiment with different genres, which include, in addition to alternative R&B and electronica, elements of funk, soul and dance music.

2. *Anti* by Rihanna

Released after a cryptic series of videos that supposedly contained clues about the album and rumors of a deal with Samsung, Rihanna released *Anti* to great anticipation. She did not disappoint, although some fans were expecting more of the same musicality to which they were accustomed. Rihanna's eighth studio album was noted as a complete departure from her established style.

Admittedly, it isn't hard to trace any artist's development over such a prolific career, but *Anti* seems to be a total departure from the strong pop influence that has previously dictated Rihanna's musicality. Instead, it is touching and heartfelt, blending acoustic instruments with synth production beneath the nuanced vocals. Each song on *Anti* incorporates a blend of different musi-

cal styles that inform a musical journey that is diverse and yet remains cohesive because of the singer's impressive vocals, the thematic consistency of relationships, and what it means to be in love.

1. *A Seat at the Table* by Solange

Solange's third studio album, *A Seat at the Table*, is the culmination of eight years of songwriting and recording that have taken place since her last album released in 2008 and has received widespread critical acclaim. Solange said that this was more than an album for her and that it represented a transitional period in her life. She has spoken at length about the emotional stress she underwent during her work on the project.

The album's lead single, "Cranes in the Sky," was written by Solange in 2008 and was not revisited until she had completed recording the other songs on the album. "Rise," the opening track, was first performed over a year before the album's release in response to protests in Ferguson and Baltimore against acts of police brutality against black lives.

*A Seat at the Table* explores themes of empowerment and identity for African-American women, synthesizing expert musicality and relevant social commentary in an album worth recognition.

Errata: Dec. 1 Edition

In the Dec. 1, 2016 edition of *The News-Letter*, the article "Local zine inspires young female artists" mistakenly called Beast Grrl Collective the Balti Grrl Collective. The original article also stated that the group was begun by 2 students. It was founded and is currently run by 3 students.

*The News-Letter* regrets these errors.



## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

# Results: Arts & Entertainment poll

Your top picks from 2016

## Favorite a cappella group

Winner: AllNighters

Runner-up: Vocal Chords

## Favorite Dance Group

Winner: SLAM Hip Hop Dance Group

Runner-up: Jaywalk

## Favorite on-campus study spot

Winner: Brody Atrium

Runner-up: Brody Reading Room

## Favorite place to get coffee near campus

Winner: Red Emma's

Runner-up: Starbucks

## Favorite pop album

Winner: *Lemonade* by Beyoncé

Runner-up: *Starboy* by The Weeknd

## Favorite superhero film

Winner: *Deadpool*

Runner-up: *Captain America: Civil War*

## Fashion trend that must die

Winner: emoji clothing

Runner-up: man buns

## Favorite meme

Winner: Joe Biden

Runner-up: Kermit darkside

## Favorite Snapchat filter

Winner: Face swap

Runners-up: Flower crown, dog face, puking rainbows

## Favorite comedy group

Winner: Mental Notes

Runner-up: Buttered Niblets

## Favorite place to see live music

Winner: Baltimore Soundstage

Runner-up: The Crown, The Ottobar

## Favorite new restaurant near campus

Winner: Honeygrow

Runner-up: BOZ's Burger Bistro

## Favorite rock/indie album

Winner: *22, A Million* by Bon Iver

Runner-up: *A Moon Shaped Pool* by Radiohead

## Favorite Rap Album

Winner: *Coloring Book* by Chance the Rapper

Runner-up: *The Life of Pablo* by Kanye West

## Favorite reboot/revival

Winner: *Deadpool*

Runner-up: *Gilmore Girls*

## Worst sneaker

Winner: Light-Up Starburys

Runner-up: "Chef" Curry 2 Lows

## Worst Meme

Winner: Harambe

Runner-up: Pepe as a hate symbol

## Funniest professor

Winner: Jared Hickman

Runner-up: 41-way tie

# Supersonic shows both sides of Oasis

OASIS, FROM PAGE B3

takes, if only so as to make their efforts feel less futile.

Fascinatingly, perhaps one of relatively few things the Gallagher brothers shared in common was their violent entry points into exploring music. For Noel, the older of the two, this came in the form of having the talent "beaten into him" by his abusive father.

Retreating into his room to smoke joints and play the guitar or listen to records became a habitual means of coping for him and it's likely the amount of time he spent doing this that helped him develop his talents.

Liam, meanwhile, wasn't interested in music at all until he got in a fight with one of his classmates, who attacked him and split his head open with a hammer. In a somewhat eerie, kooky way this triggered something in his brain that inspired him to engage with music.

While Liam often bore the brunt of the media's criticism, the film highlights how both of the Gallagher brothers could be brutal towards the other members of the band when it came to executing their vision.

One example of this is that Noel didn't hesitate to kick drummer Tony McCarroll, a childhood friend of Liam's, out of the band. There has been some controversy regarding what the true reasoning behind this decision was, but Noel has maintained that it was because he felt like McCarroll was not going lagging behind in the studio when they worked on tracks.

As he wrote songs like "Wonderwall," Noel claims to have had it in the back of his mind that McCarroll was not going to be up to par to drum on them. Thus, Alan White, of another British rock band named Starclub, replaced McCarroll on Oasis's 1995 album, *(What's the Story) Morning Glory?*.

As many critics have pointed out, it's rather strange that Whitecross chose to leave out the heated conflict between Oasis and their Britpop rivals, Blur, which culminated in the two bands releasing singles on the same day. The duel between the two bands was billed as "The Battle of Britpop" which also spawned the iconic

NME cover portraying the duel between the two bands as the "British Heavyweight Championship." Blur ended up winning the battle with their single, "Country House" outselling Oasis's "Roll With It" by over 50,000 copies.

In an interview published on NME, editor Steve Sutherland put it simply.

"Oasis didn't think that Blur were proper rock stars, and Blur didn't really give two figs what Oasis thought of anything."

Yet, the media tried to make the schism between the two just as much about class as it was about music, crafting a narrative that pitched Blur as the relatively privileged, middle-class counterpart to Oasis's grimy, working class underdog. Perhaps Whitecross consciously chose to leave this element out of *Supersonic* so as to maintain a narrow focus on the complex dynamics within the band.

Although the period of time that the film highlights predates Oasis's break-up, Whitecross lets their own at times insane stories speak for themselves in terms of acknowledging their faults. At the same time, there's simply no denying their talent, especially while watching the glimpses of footage from their early shows and recording sessions.

Noel and Liam had an almost supernatural connection that enabled them to understand each other, at least sonically. It's amazing to see how Liam could look at lyrics Noel had written and sing them pitch-perfectly in only a couple of takes.

Meanwhile, there's a certain ridiculous, frenetic humor that courses through the documentary's veins as well. When they weren't at each other's throats, the band were drunken, drug-infused goofballs, having the time of their lives with the opportunity they'd been given.

Sure, maybe they shouldn't have accidentally done a copious amount of meth (which they thought at the time was cocaine) before their first big show in the U.S., and maybe it would've been prudent to not get arrested and kicked off of the ferry to their first international show.

But is there really anything else that could properly encompass Oasis?

# The Sun's Tirade rules 2016's rap releases

RAP, FROM PAGE B3

can eat his heart out.

## 3. Still Brazy by YG

One of the greatest West Coast albums of the 2010s. This is significant praise considering the great output of the whole West Coast over the past few years (T.D.E., The Game, Dr. Dre and many more). YG perfectly rides the line between ignorant and conscious.

While replacing every 'C' with a 'B,' slurring his words and twisting his fingers, YG still finds a very real and touching way to describe the pain of street life. It's incredible to think that the same artist who made "Toot it and Boot it" (a great song in its own right), now records conscious and powerful tracks like "Blacks & Browns," and "Police Get Away Wit

Murder."

While he hasn't grown into an impressive lyricist, he is nonetheless a great rapper due to a contagious charisma and effortless flow and lines that are blunt and frank. The beats are a definite highlight — classic West Coast with synths harmonizing under string melodies, basslines bouncing around 808s and tinkling riffs in the high frequencies.

## 2. Atrocity Exhibition by Danny Brown

This is the most experimental and exciting record of the past few years. No other rapper could rap over the beats that Brown chooses, which bounce, clip and scratch — absolutely glitched out and twisted. Danny Brown doesn't just spit over them, he tears through them, with lyrics that alternate from touch-

ing and emotional to hilarious and audacious.

It is important to head into this project with an open mind, since much of it will sound like nothing else you have heard. Not only is there this overarching electronic theme, but Danny also starts mixing genres that usually sound horrible together, specifically rock and hip hop.

Nevertheless, under his wild flow, they somehow perfectly complement each other. This is probably Brown's most grating project. It takes several exposures to the sensory overload before one begins to accept the madness contained in this one record.

## 1. The Sun's Tirade by Isaiah Rashad

This album was basically unanimously agreed upon by the staff as the best album of 2016. It is a deep,

layered piece of work centered on depression, a significant topic that is rarely touched in rap music. This is done in a powerful and beautiful way.

The instrumentals are simultaneously smooth and hard-hitting. Something about the mixing of the kick drums around and between the bass lines makes everything sound heavy. Rashad has a quiet and smooth voice that perfectly contrasts with this low, brooding production.

Unlike all of the other artists on this list, his rapping style is more understated, carried by flawless delivery and great lyricism rather than melody and charisma. Songs like "Park," "Dressed Like Rappers" and "4r Da Squaw" will be revisited throughout the next decade. This will be the album to show Rashad is a unique and strong part of T.D.E.



ANGELA N/CC-BY-2.0

Oasis playing a concert at the Patriot Center in Fairfax, Va. in 2008.



# CARTOONS, ETC.

Grave Humor : Holidead Double Feature

By Stephanie Herrera

## HAPPY



## HAUNTUKKAH

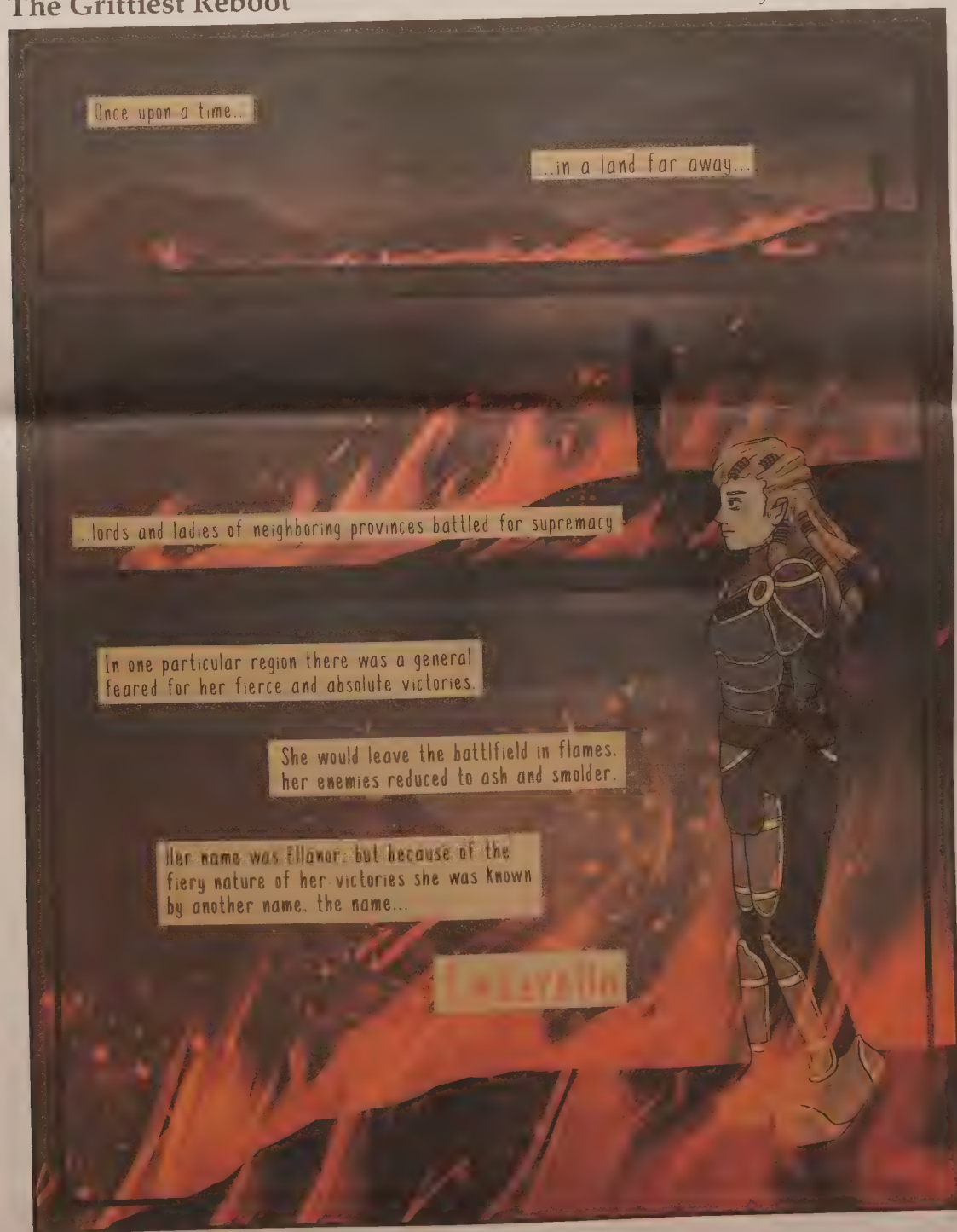
## BOODOLPH THE DEAD



## RED-NOSED REINDEER

The Grittiest Reboot

By Erica Schwarz



Happy Holidays  
from the Cartoons Page





# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

## Supercapacitors may speed up charging

By WILLIAM XIE  
For The News-Letter

A world where your phone can be charged in seconds may not be out of reach.

Recently, a University of Central Florida team of researchers developed an upgraded supercapacitor that is superior to the conventional lithium ion battery in terms of energy density, power density and cyclic stability. The improved supercapacitor is a promising alternative to other energy storage devices for various applications from small electronic devices such as mobile phones, to larger applications such as electric vehicles.

Supercapacitors are energy storage devices consisting of two conducting plates (electrodes), an electrolyte and a separator. Using electrostatics, energy can be charged and discharged quickly. The speed of high burst energy discharge is in-

stantaneous, opening possibilities of vehicular application. Compared to lithium ion batteries, which are commonly found in power mobile devices, laptops and tablets, supercapacitors can charge devices faster with a longer cycle lifetime or number of charges without significant change in performance.

However, a major downside to supercapacitors is their low energy density. In other words, supercapacitors cannot store high amounts of energy, thus they are not able to keep a device charged for long.

Supercapacitor technology has been around for decades, and optimizing its performance is possible in many ways. Highly conductive electrode materials that have porous structures allow better ion transport, which is a key aspect in supercapacitor research. In addition to better

SEE BATTERY, PAGE B8



PUBLIC DOMAIN  
In the future, charging your phone may take only a few seconds.

## DNA might make up only half of chromosomes

By CATHY NIE  
For The News-Letter

In a recent study published in the journal *Molecular Cell*, scientists discovered that DNA may make up only about half of the material found in chromosomes. In fact, up to 47 percent of a chromosome's makeup may consist of a sheath, or a protective structure, surrounding DNA.

Researchers suggest that this sheath could play an essential role in keeping chromosomes separate during cell division, which would help prevent mutations that could lead to birth defects, cancer and other diseases.

Using a process called 3D correlative light-electron microscopy (3D-CLEM), researchers from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, the Kazusa DNA Research Institute in Japan, the National Cancer Institute in the United States and the University of Liverpool in the United Kingdom were able to form an image of chromosomal structure and use this image to study the chromosome in great detail.

3D-CLEM, which combines light and electron microscopy with modelling software, allows researchers to produce high-resolution images and observe the presence of the sheath on all 46 human chromosomes.

In analyzing the 3D-CLEM images, scientists found that only 53 to 70 percent of chromosomes may be made of chromatin, which contains DNA and supporting proteins. Previously, scientists had believed that chromosomes were tightly packed structures of DNA and histones.

Although chromosomes were discovered in 1882, their exact makeup

is still unknown. This may be the result of technological limitations that prevented the detection of the sheath and the other materials that surround it until recently.

The imaging technique we have developed to study chromosomes is truly groundbreaking. Defining the structure of all 46 human chromosomes for the first time has forced us to reconsider the idea that they are composed almost exclusively of chromatin, an assumption that has gone largely unchallenged for almost 100 years," Daniel Booth, a research fellow from the University of Edinburgh who co-led the study, said in a press release.

"We now have to rethink how chromosomes are built and how they segregate when cells divide, since the genetic material is covered by this thick layer of other material," Bill Earnshaw, a professor at the University of Edinburgh's School of Biological Sciences who also co-led the study, said in the press release.

The results of the Edinburgh study support the findings of a study published in 1925 by *Genetics*. In an article titled "The Role of the 'Chromosome Sheath' In Mitosis, and Its Possible Relation to Phenomena of Mutation," Charles W. Metz, a member of the Department of Genetics at the Carnegie Institute of Washington, noted possible functions



DR. JOSEF REISCHIG/CC-BY-SA 3.0  
Chromosomes (the dense, purple clumps) may contain less DNA than previously thought.

of the sheath. In the study, Metz concluded that chromosomes that exhibited this sheath might be able to separate more easily during cell division.

Metz also described the chromosome sheath as "a gelatinous layer of material" and noted that many scientists typically disregard it due to the fact that it is usually invisible in common imaging technologies.

Although he stated in the *Genetics* article that it is uncertain whether or not the sheath is a typical part of chromosomes in general, Metz also predicted that the sheath may play a crucial role in cell replication and may

be involved in preventing mutations.

Ninety-one years later, Metz's hypotheses may be confirmed. With new imaging techniques such as 3D-CLEM, scientists may now be able to observe the role of chromosome sheaths in cell division as well as investigate their structure.

Understanding the chemical makeup of the sheath as well as its role will help scientists better understand the process of random mutation during mitosis. Perhaps in the future, scientists may also be able to alter the chromosome sheath and intercept harmful mutations.

## Nylon fibers used to make artificial muscle

By SHERRY SIMKOVIC  
Staff Writer

MIT mechanical engineers have developed an easy and cheap method of creating artificial muscle fibers.

In the new study, published in the journal *Advanced Materials*, the scientists used nylon fiber to replicate natural muscle fibers. Artificial muscles are materials or devices that contract and expand in response to an external stimulus like voltage, pressure or temperature.

Researchers have previously shown that artificial muscles could extend and retract further than normal muscles. Artificial muscles are an emerging technology that have many uses from biomedical robotics to the aviation and automobile industries.

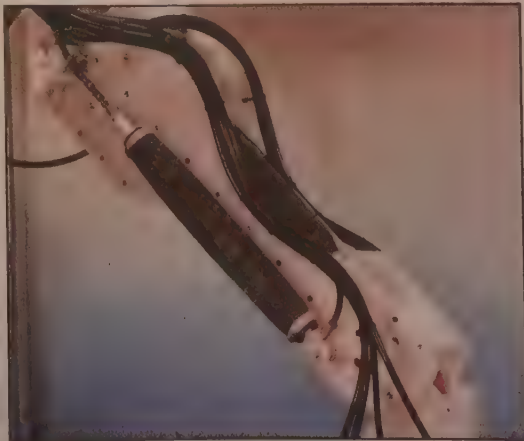
Nylon is cheap and easily accessible, and scientists have previously used twisted coils of nylon to create artificial fibers. The advancement of the new study lies in the ability of the nylon to reproduce the bending motions of muscle fibers.

When heated, fibers shrink in length but increase in diameter. To turn that quality into a bending motion would previously have required a pulley and other extraneous mechanical parts. But the new study uses nylon heating to their advantage. The team figured out that they could produce a bending motion by using voltage to heat one side of the fiber.

They began by modifying the cross-section of nylon fishing line fibers, changing its shape from round to square. Then they tried controlling from which direction they heated the fiber. Depending on the direction, one side would begin contracting before the heat could reach the other side, producing a bending motion. They were able to make more complex motions with the fibers, including figure eights and circles.

"The cooling rate can be a limiting factor. But I realized it could be used to an advantage," Seyed Mirvakili, a Ph.D. student at MIT and the lead on the

SEE MUSCLE, PAGE B9



DAVID BUCKLEY/CC-BY-SA 3.0  
Nylon is more flexible and lighter than traditional artificial muscle.

## New group of stars discovered in our Milky Way

By RAYYAN JOKHAI  
Staff Writer

An astronomer from the Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) Astrophysics Research Institute has found a new group of stars within our Milky Way Galaxy. The implications of this discovery could be enormous, as this sheds light on the early stages of the formation of the Milky Way Galaxy.

More specifically, the discovery of the new star family provides a better understanding of the origins of globular clusters.

Globular clusters are specific areas comprised of approximately a million stars that appeared at the very beginning of the Milky Way Galaxy's formation. These dense clusters orbit the center of the galaxy they belong to and are considered satellites, celestial bodies that orbit

around a gravitational center. The Milky Way in particular has approximately 150 known globular clusters.

LJMU is one of many international institutions part of the Sloan Digital Sky Survey. This group has made many advances including the detection of clustering in galaxies, the discovery of the most distant quasars and brown dwarfs, the detection of kinematical and chemical populations of the Galactic bulge and the mapping of star streams.

One of the many projects of the program is the Apache Point Observatory Galactic Evolution Experiment (APOGEE). The goal of this project is to assemble infrared data of certain Milky Way stars.

The APOGEE project uses high-resolution, high signal-to-noise infrared spectroscopy to peer be-

yond the dust that obscures significant fractions of the Milky Way.

In doing so, the project hopes to survey over 100,000 red giant stars across all four regions of the Milky Way: the bulge, bar, disk and halo. Data collected, such as the radial velocities and chemical composition (also known as "chemical fingerprinting"), will provide entirely new understandings regarding the structure and formation of the Milky Way Galaxy.

"The center of the Milky Way is poorly understood, because it is blocked from view by intervening dust. Observing in the infrared, which is less absorbed by dust than visible light, APOGEE can see the center of the Galaxy better than other teams," Ricardo Schiavon, the lead researcher on the project, said in a press release.

It was through the infrared observation of the core of the Milky Way Galaxy that the new stars were unearthed. Groups of stars similar to the ones found in the novel family had only been observed inside globular clusters before.

However, the APOGEE project enabled the astronomers to, for the first time,

discover and visualize stars from this population that seem to be outside of their original cluster.

It is possible that the unique star family may have belonged to globular clusters that were lost during the very violent beginnings of the Milky Way Galaxy core's formation. If this proves to be correct, there would have been about 10 times as many globular clusters in the Milky Way when it first formed, compared to the number of clusters we observe currently.

Furthermore, if this hypothesis proves true about the newly discovered family of stars, it is likely that a large percentage of stars residing in the inner, core parts of the Milky Way belonged to and formed in globular clusters that were destroyed due to the violent nature of the Galaxy's formation.

"This is a very exciting finding that helps us address fascinating questions such as what is the nature of the stars in the inner regions of the Milky Way, how globular clusters formed and what role they played in the formation of the early Milky Way — and by extension the formation of other galaxies," Schiavon said.



# New truck can run on hydrogen fuel cells

By SCOTT ZHENG  
Science & Technology Editor

The Nikola Motor Company is developing a Class 8 truck, the Nikola One, that comes equipped with hydrogen fuel cell technology. Class 8 trucks are more commonly known as 18-wheelers, or semi-trucks, and have traditionally used diesel fuel as a form of energy.

Diesel fuel exhaust contains environmentally harmful chemical compounds, including various nitrogen oxides and particulate matter. These emissions are carcinogenic, correlated with an increased risk of human cancer and organ damage, making these emissions a major public health concern.

Hydrogen fuel could reduce the environmental impact that diesel fuel has. There are many different types of hydrogen fuel cells, but their emissions are generally more environmentally friendly. In one example of a hydrogen fuel cell, hydrogen can react with atmospheric oxygen to produce a byproduct of water, a more environmentally friendly emission and less harmful to humans, which would be released as exhaust into the environment.

In addition to creating a more environmentally friendly than the current crop of diesel fuel semi-trucks on the road, Nikola claims that their truck is more powerful. They estimate that the truck will run at 1,000 horsepower and 2,000 pound-feet of torque, almost double the power of diesel fuel semis.

The hydrogen fuel cell in the Nikola One charges lithium-ion batteries. These batteries power the electric motors in the truck and minimize carbon and particulate matter emissions.

Currently, there are very few hydrogen fueling stations due to the lack of hydrogen-fuel cars on the road. There are three "everyday" hydrogen-fuel automobiles, and their markets are limited. The lack of hydrogen fueling stations is perhaps one reason why the market is so limited.

"The reason why cars are not powered by hydrogen fuel cells is not really about efficiency. It is more of an economy of scale and infrastructure issue," Steven Doria, a senior chemical and bio-

molecular engineering major at Hopkins, said "It is really hard for a company that is selling a hydrogen-fueled car to make it into the market because the infrastructure for distributing hydrogen is not in place whereas the infrastructure for distributing gasoline is there."

However, one of the hydrogen-fuel cars available for commercial use, the Toyota Mirai, has been expanding its market. In 2014, the automobile was exclusively marketed in Japan but now has markets in parts of the United States and several European countries.

If there are people willing to buy more hydrogen-fuel cars, companies may be willing to invest in the infrastructure for distributing hydrogen.

Nikola Motor Company also plans in aiding this effort: The company is working to build over 300 hydrogen fueling stations in the United States and Canada starting in 2018. The Nikola One has shown promise already as various companies have reserved almost 7,000 semi-trucks for purchase as they are released.

The Nikola One will have the ability to drive for up to 1,200 miles without refueling, higher than the current operational range for diesel trucks of 750 miles.

This could be worrying for truck drivers, who often face health concerns of their own due to lack of movement, since they would be more likely to drive for longer hours.

A report by the Centers for Disease Control in 2015 revealed 27 percent of long-haul truck drivers, the type that drive Class 8 trucks, revealed that they had not any vigorous physical activity in the past week. Such behaviors can contribute to poorer health outcomes. Indeed, nearly 70 percent of long-haul truck drivers were obese, more than double the prevalence of obesity in the United States.

The Nikola Motor Company wishes to produce a truck that can benefit the environment and improve the overall population's health. However, they may want to consider the health of those who are driving their trucks, long-haul truck drivers.

# Multielectrode stimulation can treat paralysis

By ISAAC CHEN  
For The News-Letter

Imagine yourself sitting comfortably in a car, gazing through the window at the oak trees gradually coming into sight and then vanishing quickly in a blur as the wheels continue in its steady, rolling motion. A flash of light blinds your eyes momentarily, fear immediately disperses across your entire body. The airbag in front bursts out shortly, and a huge mass crashes into your door.

The next day you wake up feeling numb chest down with each limb feeling 100 pounds heavier. You see your fingers intact but motionless. Frustrated, you realize only your neck and head moves while the rest of your body is strapped down by invisible chains.

According to the Mayo Clinic, "auto and motorcycle accidents are the leading cause of spinal injuries, accounting for more than 35 percent new spinal cord injuries each year."

Paralysis due to spinal cord injury inhibits one's ability to perform basic motor functions, thereby reducing quality of life.

Although paralyzed individuals can have perfectly functional brains and peripheral nerves, electrical signals between the two cannot flow due to spinal cord damage. They are often overwhelmed by various emotions such as embarrassment, help-

lessness or fearfulness. Therefore, restoring basic movements like grasping or walking is critical to them as a means of returning to a normal life.

Researchers from the University of Utah and Oregon State University joined forces to bring new hope for paralyzed patients in a study recently published in the journal *Frontiers in Neuroscience*.

Functional neuromuscular stimulation (FNS) is a popular method that has been researched intensively by scientists who are working to restore basic motor functions in paralyzed individuals.

However, FNS devices are "limited by rapid muscle fatigue due to high stimulation frequencies and inverse recruitment of fast-fatiguing fibers, as well as and poorly evoked movement kinematics," according to the paper published by the research group.

The researchers conducted the experiment by using a proportional-integral-velocity (PIV) controller, which sends electrical



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Intrafascicular multielectrode stimulation can help stimulate fatigue-resistant muscles.

pulses at a fixed rate using an error-feedback loop, and applying the method of asynchronous intrafascicular multielectrode stimulation (aIFMS) on anesthetized cats, which is a commonly used model for human paralysis.

aIFMS allows the smooth, fatigue-resistant muscles to work by stimulating multiple independent peripheral nerve motor axons at a "lower stimulation amplitude and low per-electrode frequency" asynchronously. This technique is better able to imitate naturally occurring biochemical processes in muscles compared to the FNS technique.

Additionally, the development of the Utah Slanted Electrode Array (USEA) allowed the researchers to selectively activate the specific motor axons of interest. Dur-

ing the setup of this experiment, a 100-electrode stimulation device was implanted in the left sciatic nerve of the cat. Their results were successful in evoking steps in joint position, according to the researchers.

"Early versions of this technology could be used to help the person get up, use a walker and make a few steps. Even those kinds of things would have an enormous impact on someone's life, and of course we'd like people to do more," V John Mathews, a professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at Oregon State University who contributed to this experiment, said in a press release. "My hope is in five or 10 years there will be at least elemental versions of this for paralyzed persons."

# Virtual reality technology helps view fetuses



WOLFGANG MORODER/CC-BY-SA-3.0

Instead of traditional ultrasounds, 3D virtual reality can now be used to visualize fetuses.

By ANNA CHEN  
For The News-Letter

Last year, the internet community was touched by a video of a blind mother-to-be crying happy tears as she traced her fingers over the 3-D printed ultrasound of her unborn son.

Scientists are now ready to take parents' first meetings with their children to a whole new level.

Led by Dr. Heron Werner, researchers at the Clínica de Diagnóstico por Imagem in Brazil recently developed a groundbreaking scanning technology. It combines ultrasound and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to allow mothers and fathers to meet with their unborn children in an immersive, multimedia and three-dimensional virtual reality.

Ultrasound and MRI are used to scan parts of the baby, which can be processed and put togeth-

er by computer software and brought to life with an Oculus Rift 2 virtual reality headset.

The immersive technology is complete with sounds of the fetus's heartbeat, and the headset allows users to study the 3-D view of the fetus from different angles simply by moving their head. Utilizing this new technology, parents will truly be able to watch their child's development from up close even before birth.

The scope of these virtual reality models does not end at family bonding. The 3-D fetal models merged with virtual reality technology have the potential to improve understanding of fetal anatomy. Since the models have been found to be almost identical to the postnatal appearance of the newborns, they can also help doctors identify, characterize and solve a variety of pre-birth problems.

Models may also be

utilized to predict difficulties that occur during or after birth.

The remarkably accurate model, which includes the womb, fetus, placenta and umbilical cord, also maps out the complete internal structure of the fetus, including a detailed recreation of the respiratory and digestive tracts.

One common complication after child delivery is the inadequacy of airway patency. Airway patency, or the state of airways being unblocked, is an important issue for a developing fetus.

At the time of birth, the infant's airways must be open in order for it to clear its lungs and take its first breath of air. With 3-D virtual reality imaging, doctors can assess the entirety of the airway. If physicians notice that there is an unusual mass near the fetus's airway in ultrasound imaging, they can use 3-D visualization to plan the safest and most efficient way to clear the airway properly following birth.

In addition, other abnormalities in the fetus's development can be more easily noticed with the fetal images in virtual reality, which is sharper and

clearer compared to those generated by ultrasound and MRI on traditional displays.

Treatment of developmental issues that require special medical or surgical attention immediately after birth can be carefully planned and prepared for so that no time is lost. More serious abnormalities in unborn babies that demand action right away can be diagnosed and corrected earlier on, especially with advancing surgical technology that can now be used to operate on a fetus that is still in the womb.

In the case in which a fetus does have abnormalities, it is often up to the parents to make a difficult and sometimes even devastating choice about their baby's health and treatment.

With immersive visualization, parents, too, can join in the discussion about their child and develop a more concrete understanding of any developmental issues that their baby may have. A better understanding of the baby's state can help physicians and parents to make better informed decisions about delivery and care.

According to Dr. Werner, he and his team hope that 3-D immersive virtual reality visualizations of unborn babies will involve parents with their child at an earlier stage and help ease discussions between physicians and parents about fetal diseases.

Scientifically and socially, their novel development addresses several important problems at once.



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Currently, trucks use diesel fuel, which is harmful for the environment.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

It's time for scientists to get out of the lab



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Scientists should be encouraged to be involved outside the lab.



Duy Phan  
The Brain Wave

About a year ago, I was invited to have dinner with the big-shot academic and administrative officials at Hopkins. Sitting to my right was the Dean of the Business School, Bernard Ferrari, and directly opposite from me was a Board of Trustees member. As I prepared to dive into my beef short ribs, Dean Ferrari asked me the following question: “So, I hear about all these Black Student Union protests going on at campus. Can you tell me more about social justice issues going on in Hopkins?”

I froze. I searched my soul for an answer, anything that I concoct, but I could not even mutter a single sentence. All that I could think about was my GPA and work in the lab. Did I even pay attention to anything else on campus other than academic work that only served my self-interest? What seemed like a perfectly interesting and reasonable conversation starter stumped me, perhaps even worse than my organic chemistry midterm exam.

Being stumped made me realize that it's time for scientists to get out of the lab.

No, I do not mean to say that all scientists need to quit their jobs. Science needs hard-working people to stay in the lab to make scientific discoveries that push back boundaries of human knowledge.

What I mean here is that in addition to the lab, I believe scientists as a whole also need to become more involved in real-life issues that concern not only themselves, but also large populations in society.

There is a stereotype that scientists are boring nerds who live in the lab. Of course this is a sweeping generalization and there are many exceptions to the stereotype, but I have observed (in myself and some others) that there is some truth to the stereotype.

I have realized that at times, I am almost incapable of talking about non-science-related topics (as described in the above). I find this to be quite embarrassing, since there are literally dozens of protests happening right outside the building, yet I don't even know about them

because I am too busy running lab experiments.

Now again, there is nothing wrong with doing experiments, but too many scientists are so wrapped up with the lab that they have completely lost sight of the reality outside of the lab. There is almost a sense of apathy for issues outside of the lab.

Such apathy is dangerous to science, because scientific research ultimately depends on public support. We need more, not less public funding for STEM research.

The only way that this can happen is for scientists to get out of the lab and get in touch with reality. There are too many lawyers and businessmen in government; We need to get more scientists in politics so that people with real scientific expertise can guide policy developments that optimally benefit science.

Even if scientists are not directly running for office, they should also make efforts to engage the public to advocate for science awareness. Scientists often worry about research funding, but if they are not willing to go outside of the lab to advocate, how can they convince lawmakers and the public to invest in research?

Supercapacitor designed as new battery

**BATTERY, PAGE B7**

materials, efficient electrode designs also play a major role in the performance of the supercapacitor.

Researchers implemented a novel design and new materials to improve the performance of the supercapacitor. The type of supercapacitors the researchers studied use a material called two-dimensional transition metal dichalcogenides (2D TMDs).

“There have been problems in the way people incorporate these two-dimensional materials into the existing systems — that’s been a bottleneck in the field. We developed a simple chemical synthesis approach so we can very nicely integrate the existing materials with the two-dimensional materials,” Yeonwoong Jung, an assistant professor at the University of Central Florida and lead investigator, said in a press release.

The researchers added an array of electrochemically active 1D nanowires which increased the total surface area, capacitance and mechanical robust-

ness of the supercapacitor. These nanowires were coated with the 2D materials which promote faster charging and discharging. The researchers hypothesized the integration of both 1D and 2D materials will offer synergistic advantages.

The specific material combination called h-WO<sub>3</sub>/WS<sub>2</sub> core/shell nanowire with a 0.1 M sodium sulfate electrolyte was tested with several electrochemical techniques.

The researchers conclude their electrode design and hybrid materials provide various improvements to supercapacitor performance. In their paper published in *ASC Nano*, the researchers reported excellent capacitive properties and a 30,000 cycle stability, which means that the battery can be charged, drained and recharged 30,000 times before it starts to degrade.

In comparison, a typical lithium ion battery will face degraded performance after 1,500 cycles. The improved supercapacitor also achieved a competitive



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Supercapacitors have a higher energy density than lithium batteries.

maximum energy density of 600 Wh/L, which according to the researchers, outperforms almost all of the other leading batteries and capacitors in the field.

Advancements in supercapacitor capabilities may potentially lead to its usage in small electronic devices such as mobile phones. If supercapacitors can be commercialized with energy and power densities and cyclic stability superior to conventional lithium ion batteries, they could

replace lithium ion batteries as the new energy storage device.

Obstacles include cost, adaptation and need for further advancement. The flexible nature of the materials could also add compatibility in wearable technology.

“It’s not ready for commercialization,” Jung said in a press release. “But this is a proof-of-concept demonstration, and our studies show there are very high impacts for many technologies.”

Nylon fibers to be used in biomedical devices

**MUSCLE PAGE B7**

study, said in a press release.

In the past, scientists have used materials that were very expensive and very difficult to make. The materials should also be long-lasting and able to go through many contraction cycles. Researchers have tried to use carbon nanotubes, which are incredibly long-lasting but are very expensive. Others have tried using shape-memory alloys which do not last very long. Nylon is both long-lasting and can expand and contract quickly.

According to Ian Hunter, a mechanical engineer-

ing professor at MIT, the fibers might be used to make self adjusting shoes that tighten when you put them on or change in shape and stiffness as you walk. He further suggested that we might be able to use fibers for clothes that contract to fit the contours of an individual body, to reduce the number of sizes a manufacturer has to make.

“[This method] is novel and elegant, with very good experimental data supported by appropriate physics-based models,” Geoffrey Spinks, a professor at the University of Wollongong in Australia, said in a press release.

“This is a simple idea that works really well. The materials are inexpensive. The manufacturing method is simple and versatile. The method of actuation is by simple electrical input.”

Bending-type actuators are needed for robotic grippers, microscopic tools, and various machine components. These new bending actuators could have immediate application,” Spinks adds.

The new nylon fibers can be used in biomedical devices like self-adjusting catheters. In the automobile and airplane industries, mechanical systems can be fundamentally changing.

Tracking systems for solar panels may use excess heat to keep the panels aimed the sun. And the outside of cars may adjust their aerodynamic shape to adapt to changes in speed and wind conditions.

“[These are] exciting and game-changing findings,” Andrew Taberner, an associate professor of bioengineering at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, said in a press release. “One can imagine many applications for this type of actuator in the medical and instrumentation fields. I expect that this work will become highly cited.”

There is symmetry in economic and quantum uncertainty

Karl Johnson  
Guest Column

The world of quantum mechanics is hardly the same world we inhabit on a daily basis. Reduced to its fundamentals, matter seems much less calculative than we expect.

Experiments in particle physics that began in the early 1900s with the likes of Schrödinger and Heisenberg depict a conception of reality in which events are far more probabilistic than determined. Unlike a ball hitting a bat, when an electron repels against another electron we cannot know with absolute confidence where it will go next. Its final trajectory is the collapse of an infinite number of probabilities, all impossible to predict in sum.

But not all modern physicists can commit to the quantum world. In a recent interview with *Science News*, Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg admitted that, though a lifelong believer of the quantum agenda, he now sympathizes with critics of the theory.

Speaking from his gut, he confessed that it is “so

ugly to imagine that we have no knowledge of anything out there — we can only say what happens when we make a measurement.” Weinberg’s simple wish is that we can look to the past, and indeed to the future, with some amount of certainty.

In this restlessness with uncertainty, theoretical physics is accompanied by a field of study across the academic spectrum: economics.

When formal economic thought expanded during the Enlightenment, it did so upon specific assumptions about human behavior. While Isaac Newton reduced the motion of galaxies into six-variable equations, John Locke and Thomas Hobbes were reducing the behavior of markets into basic exchanges of supply and demand.

Importantly, economic actors in these exchanges were expected to perform rationally so as to maximize their individual profit or utility. This concept of decision making, commonly referred to as the neoclassical model, works off a caricature of man that has wittily been dubbed *homo economicus* — someone who always makes the best decisions for his or her welfare — in

the late nineteenth century by critics of political economist John Stuart Mill.

It goes without saying that *homo economicus* does not exist. You and I often act completely irrationally — when deciding how to study, what friendships to invest time in, what to purchase at UniMini, etc.

Yet it has taken some time for economists to factor these quirks into their equations. Only the last half century has acknowledged, through the growing field of behavioral economics, more nuanced psychological accounts of decision making — personal heuristics, situational biases and paradoxes in perception are all now on the blackboard.

With this acknowledgement, economics is slowly returning to the highly unpredictable unit of study that lies at the center of us all — essentially *homo sapien*.

In the same way that we cannot predict the trajectory of electrons, neither can we calculate absolutely how a single person will

respond to various market incentives. With the same growing pains experienced by physicists a century ago, uncertainty has reared its incalculable head in the economic market.

This shared characteristic is only accentuated by the analytic respect given to each field. If physics is the most mathematically grounded discipline of the hard sciences, then economics must be considered the same for the social sciences (indeed, it is the only field that has awarded a Nobel Prize among its humanities kin, and likewise for this reason).

Yet, as we have now come to realize, this shared respect may come with some embarrassing naivety.

Nevertheless, with these two disciplines serving as bookends, one can now imagine a spectrum of uncertainty stretching from theoretical physics to economics, with the source of uncertainty gradually shifting from the world outside the unit of study (electrons, protons, etc.) to the

world inside it (the mind of a person).

In the middle of this spectrum is biochemistry, for instance; it is far enough away from quantum wave functions to make accurate molecular predictions and far enough away from consciousness to avoid arbitrary personal preference.

Taking a step back from this spectrum, while uncertainty for both the physicist and economist (and everyone in-between) may be troubling at an academic level or even viscerally for those like Weinberg, in a cosmic sense uncertainty is a beautiful thing.

Just as we cherish the quirky spontaneity of our friends, acknowledging the unpredictable behavior of matter at a fundamental level is similarly exciting.

There is a certain degree of enchantment that exists between the present and the future, and both electrons and the people right next to us grant us this imaginative beauty. So while uncertainty may damage the elegance of our equations, it will certainly not damage the elegance of our relationship to the external world as we break from our daily march and dance along with it.

In a cosmic sense, uncertainty is a beautiful thing.



## SPORTS

## Nailbiters: the 10 greatest games of 2016

Daniel Landy  
DanLand

**I**t has been an amazing year for sports, headlined by stunning upsets, buzzer beaters and instant classics. I have ranked what, in my opinion, were the top 10 games in the sports world over the past 12 months.

10. The Chicago Cubs' 7-6 victory over the Seattle Mariners on July 31 was an incredibly entertaining midsummer game that served as a much-needed highlight during the long baseball season.

After the Mariners jumped out to an early 6-0 lead in the first three innings, the eventual World Series champions — the Chicago Cubs, who will be making another appearance on this list — pulled out the victory after several memorable plays.

Pitcher Travis Wood's gold glove-caliber catch in left field, Addison Russell's game-tying run on a wild pitch with two outs in the ninth inning and pitcher Jon Lester's walk-off suicide squeeze in the 10th inning highlighted the thrilling comeback victory.

9. The Clemson University Tigers' 37-34 victory in an ACC slugfest against the Florida State Seminoles on Oct. 29 epitomized the best of college football. This game had frequent lead changes, fourth quarter theatrics and consistent, high caliber play on both offense and defense.

Seminoles running back Dalvin Cook's explosiveness, Tigers quarterback Deshaun Watson's coolness under pressure, Clemson's final defensive stand and tight end Jordan Leggett's sensational game-winning touchdown for the Tigers turned this hyped matchup into an unforgettable classic.

8. Clemson's 42-36 victory over the University of Louisville Cardinals on Oct. 1 was similar to the aforementioned game. The Tigers battled their ACC foe to the brink and just barely managed to come out on top when the clock expired.

The two top five-ranked

teams, both led by their Heisman-worthy quarterbacks, came into the matchup at 4-0. Clemson's Deshaun Watson and Louisville's Lamar Jackson battled for supremacy throughout the game, but Watson and the Tigers prevailed thanks to the quarterback's two late fourth quarter touchdown passes. Plus, the defense's ability to keep the Cardinals just short of the end zone in the game's final minute sealed the victory.

7. The Chicago Cubs' 8-7 victory in game seven of the World Series against the Cleveland Indians was the best possible way to end a great year of baseball and a 108-year championship drought.

The drama and suspense was straight out of a movie; with Chicago's Dexter Fowler hitting a leadoff home run; "grandpa" David Ross's pinch-hit home run off Andrew Miller; Arlindo Chapman giving up a game-tying home run to Cleveland's Rajai Davis in the eighth inning; the rain delay; and the extra inning of drama.

If the Indians had won, the movie *Major League* would have had a legitimate real-life sequel.

6. The Texas A&M University Aggies' stunning 92-88 victory over the Northern Iowa University Panthers on March 21 embodied what March Madness is all about. The Aggies were down 12 points with 44 seconds remaining in their second round matchup. This improbably forced overtime after the most insane sequence of events I have ever seen.

Alex Caruso's clutch jump shot for the Aggies with eight seconds remaining in overtime then extended the game to a second overtime period. A&M finally put away the upset Panthers in the second overtime period but not before the two teams gave us an unforgettable contest.

5. The Villanova University Wildcats' 77-74 victory over the North Carolina Tar Heels during the National Championship Game on April 4 was another example of why nothing beats March Madness.

The teams battled back and forth all game long, with neither side gaining a considerable advantage. Right when the Wildcats started to taste victory, Tar Heel senior Marcus Paige drained an acrobatic, off-balance three-pointer to tie the game with less than five seconds remaining.

A few moments later, though, all was forgiven, as Kris Jenkins cemented Villanova's place in history by nailing a buzzer-beater from downtown.

Unless you are a Tar Heel fan, you could not have asked for a more satisfying way for the season to end. Still, this isn't the best college basketball game of the season.

4. There was no better college basketball game this year than the University of Kansas Jayhawks' and the University of Oklahoma Sooners' all-time classic on Jan. 4, when the Jayhawks won 109-106 in triple overtime.

This game was a three-point barrage, with both teams sinking a combined 27 shots from downtown. Oklahoma's Buddy Hield was so dominant that he

probably could have sat out every game for the remainder of the season and still have been the player of the year... and his team didn't even

### There was no better college basketball game this year than Kansas and Oklahoma's all-time classic.

win the game!

The two teams — each ranked first in one of the two national polls and second in the other — played about as even of a game as you will ever see in basketball. The Jayhawks just happened to be the final team to make a basket.

3. The Arizona Cardinals' 26-20 victory over the Green Bay Packers on Jan. 16 is the lone NFL game to make the list. This divisional round matchup was special.

After wide receiver Michael Floyd caught a wild, tipped-ball touchdown late in the fourth quarter to give Arizona the lead, Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rodgers took over. Rodgers first threw a 60-yard Hail Mary on fourth and 20 to wide receiver Jeff Janis, and then threw yet another 41-yard Hail Mary touchdown to Janis as time expired to send the game into overtime.

After a bizarre contro-

versy that resulted from the coin not flipping during the coin toss, the Cardinal's future hall-of-famer Larry Fitzgerald quickly sealed the game and sent Arizona to the next round with a lengthy 75-yard reception, followed by a 5-yard shuffle-pass touchdown. The Packers may have lost, but their final offensive possession was unforgettable.

2. The Golden State Warriors' 121-118 overtime victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder on Feb. 27 was absolutely epic. Andre Iguodala's clutch, game-tying free throw for the Golden State Warriors to end regulation following a wild steal in the closing seconds was memorable on its own, but this game was all about Steph Curry.

Early in overtime, Curry broke his own record for three-pointers with over a month still remaining in the season. Then, he calmly hit the game-winning three-pointer from nearly half court in one of the most sensational shots ever. And, by the way, that was his 12th three-pointer of the game.

The shot tied the All-time League Record — a record that he, unsurprisingly, has since broken.

1. You would think that, as a Hopkins student, the most stressful thing I have ever experienced was in the classroom. Wrong. It was June 19, game seven. Cleveland Cavaliers and the Golden State Warriors — two teams I do not even root for. Yet, they managed to put on a seven-game showcase that culminated into the most intense game I have ever seen.

The stakes were incredibly high with Golden State's 3-1 lead erased and their historical season at its tipping point. Every player poured his heart into this game.

In the end, though, Cleveland's LeBron James' superhuman abilities and drive were exemplified by his now-iconic blocked shot. Additionally, Kyrie Irving's game-winning three-pointer over three-point king Steph Curry propelled the Cavaliers to the top of the sports world with a 93-89 victory.

If Cleveland and Golden State do indeed meet next year in the NBA Finals for what would be the third consecutive season, I honestly do not know if I could handle the anxiety again.

All I can say to 2017 is: Good luck trying to match the last 12 months.

## From strangers to family in one season

Brandon Wolfe  
Blue Jay Reflection

**P**ride and Poise: The phrase that defines Hopkins football. It is a motto that we live by, a saying that we try to epitomize on and off the field, and after only a season playing for the Blue Jays, it has quickly become a part of me.

The tradition of success, of hard work and of determination envelops you when you are in the black and blue, and now, closing in on the end of my first semester of college, I can say that becoming a member of the Hopkins football family was one of the best decisions I made in my 19 years of life.

Arriving in early August for fall camp, I was not sure what to expect. I had developed an idea of the other freshmen who would be arriving from our messages over GroupMe, which dated back to February. I remembered brief interactions with upperclassmen I encountered during my official visit early in December.

Other than that, I was coming in, almost blind. Despite expecting a rough transitional period at the start just from having to see over 80 new faces in a new locker room and in a new city, I, along with all the other freshmen, was welcomed with open arms.

We were greeted with handshakes and high-fives from the older members of the team and the coaching staff, who probed us with questions about where we were from, what position we played and how our summers had been.

As camp wore on, the strangers that once sat across us in the locker rooms had become friends, and as we became more familiar with one another, I did not feel as far away from home as I was.

Being a kid from an average sized public school in Washington, Pa., a rural suburb 40 minutes outside of Pittsburgh, I expected homesickness to be the predominant feeling I experienced throughout camp. After all, I was at a school where everyone was new. All of my friends were elsewhere, and I was the only one who chose Baltimore as my new home.

Homesickness, however, was put on the back burner as I eagerly took to the new coaching, the new environment and the new people who surrounded me.

As camp came to a close and the regular season and classes loomed, a whole new wave of nerves came unto me. How would I be able to balance a 17 credit course load with football six days a week?

At the beginning of the semester, it was rough going. Finding a routine that was comfortable and also left me with enough time to finish all of my day-to-day commitments — readings, problem sets

and studies along with watching scout film on our upcoming opponents, meetings and practice — was not easy.

On top of facing such struggles and the pressure associated with being a student athlete at Hopkins, my dad had recently lost his job, my grandfather was not in good health and I had just suffered from my second concussion in almost a year.

At my most stressful times, I questioned whether this school was right for me. However, the Hopkins football family that surrounded me noticed I was struggling and came to help. Coaches, teammates and former players all contacted me, seeing what they could do.

Whether it was a lunch at Bamboo Café, a quick pep talk on the way back to the locker room after practice or getting together with a group of Hopkins guys to discuss what we were experiencing, every little bit helped me get back on my feet. Once again, I realized why I had come to love this university and felt so much passion for the football program.

It is hard to discuss the season without mentioning the accomplishments the team had this year: an undefeated regular season, a Centennial Conference championship and an appearance in the NCAA D-III playoffs. After winning only nine games over the course of my high school career, it certainly was a wonderful feeling.

It was incredible to see how hard the coaching staff prepared for our opponents going into every game. Whether we were playing a team that had yet to win a game or a team as good as the Baltimore Ravens, our coaches were prepared, and I went into every game confident that we had a game plan that would put us in to the best possible position to succeed.

Beyond the coaching staff, my fellow teammates shared the common goal of going 1-0 each week. We focused on our opponent that week and nobody else. It was a constant effort to better ourselves through competition. Even though we were always competing, the upperclassmen were more than willing to share their knowledge of the game and the techniques they had picked up and mastered over the course of their tenure here.

Whether it was a change in stance or a slight change in step, it felt great to know that I was surrounded by teammates who genuinely wanted everyone to succeed, which, in today's sports world, can be a rarity.

I am incredibly thankful for the opportunities I have here at Hopkins, both on the field and in the classroom. I am thankful for the experiences I have had and the people I have been able to meet as a part of the Hopkins football family.

The road to championship glory is always under construction, and even just a few short weeks removed from the season, I am ready to get back on the field and work together with my teammates toward another successful season.

Pride and poise.

## W. Basketball disappoints in loss on the road

**W. BASKETBALL**, FROM B12 end of the quarter, with the score being 52-43.

Although Hopkins outscored the Mules 7-6 within the first three minutes of the final quarter, the Mules came back to give themselves a 77-55 lead with less than five minutes on the clock. Out of the game's 11 final shots, the Jays made seven of them, and Varnado made five.

Despite the Blue Jays' successful end-of-game performance, their run was not enough to overcome the Mules' lead. The final score was 86-72.

"Moving forward, this game showed us that we can compete with any team in our Conference, but we have to play the full 40 minutes. We would give them a run for five or seven minutes at a time, but we

have to keep that up for four quarters," Varnado said.

Hopkins had several standout players during the night. Scott and McGrath both recorded

17 points, and Varnado finished with 11. Cole tallied seven rebounds throughout the night, while McGrath made six. Sophomore guard Lexie Scholtz led the team with five assists.

With five freshmen and six sophomores on the roster, Hopkins is a young team.

Despite their lack of experience, the majority of players get significant time on the court, with an average of 10 players going in each game.

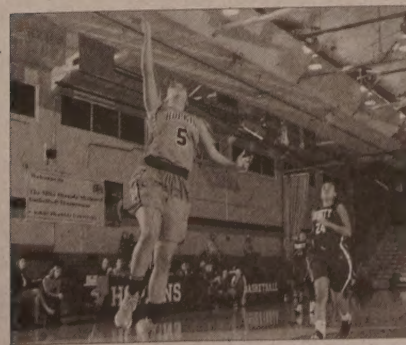
"Last season, we definitely had more players that had more experience, and we lost four seniors," Varnado said. "This year, there is a steep learning curve for the younger players, but the freshmen are working hard and doing well, and the sophomores have some experience to fall

back on, and our three senior captains work to keep us all together. It's definitely different with so many of us being underclassmen, but it's not a bad thing at all."

Saturday's game moves the Jays' all time record against the Mules to 25-24. Hopkins currently has a 2-2 record in the Centennial Conference, in a four-way tie for fourth.

"We know we can beat any team in the Conference, but no game will be handed to us," Varnado said. "We know we need to work hard in practice and prepare for each game and take it one step at a time. Overall, we have a very positive outlook for the rest of the season."

The Jays will return to Goldfarb Gym on Saturday, Dec. 10 to battle against the Dickinson College Red Devils.



HOPKINSPORTS.COM

Sophomore guard Madison McGrath scored 17 points.



SPORTS

# M. Basketball loses to Gettysburg away



HOPKINSSPORTS.COM  
Senior Ryan Curran led all scorers with 19 points on 7-13 shooting.

By **ANDREW JOHNSON**  
Sports Editor

This past weekend, the Hopkins men's basketball team travelled to Gettysburg, Pa. to take on the Gettysburg College Bullets. The matchup pitted two of the top defensive teams in the Centennial Conference, and the game certainly did not disappoint if you came looking for a defensive slugfest.

Trading blows back and forth for much of the contest, it was the sort of gritty, tough-minded game where every possession was vital and baskets were hard to come by. Ultimately, the Jays were able to hang with their foes for the entire contest but failed to hit enough crucial shots down the stretch, falling 54-51 as time expired.

The loss drops the Blue Jays to 2-3 on the season, while their Centennial Record is level at 1-1. Meanwhile, the Bullets improved to 2-3 by notching their first Conference win of the season.

People always say that basketball is a game of runs, and that certainly held true in the first half of action. Trailing 7-5 early in the first half, the Jays would go on a 15-6 run capped off by back to back three-pointers from senior forward Ryan Curran.

However, the Bullets would answer with an 11-0 run of their own to close the half, pulling ahead on a buzzer-beating three-pointer from Gettysburg forward Cameron Stewart as the clock expired. The shot was hoisted from the baseline and appeared to miraculously settle into the hoop as the Bullets took a 24-21 lead heading into the locker room. In a game that would ultimately come down to the final possession, that stroke of magic might have been the break the Bullets needed to prevail.

Gettysburg rode their momentum into the second half tip, as they connected on back to back three-pointers to stretch their lead out to seven. To keep the lead from climbing into the double digits, postgraduate guard Austin Vasiliadis would hit a jumper during this stretch for the Jays. Curran and junior forward Kyle Doran would also connect on shots to cut the deficit back down to three.

The teams would trade shots for most of the ensuing action, but then a 7-0 burst by the Jays pulled them ahead 42-40 with 8:14 to play.

However, a three point play by the Bullets would cut the lead and ultimately proved to be the turning point of the game, as it sparked one final Bullets rally that would pull them ahead for the win. Trailing 54-51 with seconds remaining, a late Jays turnover would seal

the victory for Gettysburg.

Following the game, *The News-Letter* decided to check in on the recovery of standout guard Austin Vasiliadis, who missed the majority of last season following an ACL injury. Vasiliadis was having a breakout season for the Jays over the first six games of 2015, averaging a team 14.3 points per game and pacing the squad as a facilitator and leader.

It is great to see him back on the court, as he provides an immense amount of experience and leadership for the team. In this contest, Vasiliadis contributed five points and dished out three assists in 27 minutes of action.

"Coming back from ACL surgery is a very long, arduous process. It takes a lot of hard work, patience and mental toughness, and getting back onto the court after such a serious injury is definitely a team effort," Vasiliadis said. "I would not be where I am today without a great group of doctors, physical therapists and trainers. Being my second ACL surgery on the same knee, it took a little longer to get my fitness back than the first time around."

Vasiliadis also talked about the adjustment process of getting back onto the court, mentioning that he is gaining more confidence in his athleticism each and every day.

"I was definitely a little cautious when I started playing again for the first month or so, but I have felt more and more confident with each practice and game that goes by, to the point where I hardly even think about my knee anymore," Vasiliadis said. "I am still not quite as fast or explosive as I was last year, but I feel like I have gotten to the point where I can compete at a high level. After being away from the game for so long, these first couple months of playing again have felt awesome."

Despite a few early losses, Vasiliadis remains confident that the Jays will be able to build cohesiveness as a team and start stringing together victories in Conference play.

"Our team has a great mix of experienced upperclassmen and talented young guys. Moving forward, we need to focus on being more cohesive offensively and consistent on both sides of the court," Vasiliadis said.

This time around, it was Curran, who led the Jays offensively. Leading all scorers, he chipped in 19 points on 7-13 from the field. Doran added nine points and proved to be a menace on the glass, tallying five rebounds.

The Jays will be back on the court on Dec 29th, when they travel to Ashland, Va. to take on York College.

By **COURTNEY COLWELL**  
For *The News-Letter*

This past weekend, the Hopkins men's swimming team placed third at the TPSC Invitational, toppling records and garnering victories along the way. Though the team saw incredible performances from a variety of swimmers, this week *The News-Letter* has chosen senior Evan Holder as Athlete of the Week.

Historically, Holder has been a top competitor for the Jays throughout his four years. He currently holds the school records in the 200 free, 100 breast, 200 breast, 200 IM and is a 2014 NCAA Champion in the 800-free relay. During the past two seasons, he has garnered All-American status in an astonishing seven events each year, for a career total of 18 All-American titles.

Clearly, Holder is a competitor who consistently performs, and this weekend was no different. On the opening night of the Invitational, Holder beat his personal best time in the 200 free while competing in the 800-free Relay. With a time of 1:36.93 seconds,

Holder became the first swimmer in Hopkins history to break the 1:37 mark. His triumphs only continued

## COLWELL'S COURT: EVAN HOLDER — SWIMMING

on day two of competition as Holder went on to break his own school record in the 100 breast two consecutive times, racing 55.05 in the prelims and 54.82 in the championship. On the final day of competition, Holder went on to break a pool record in the 200 IM, winning the event by 2.12 seconds in the championship race.

Though the statistics alone certainly speak for themselves, Holder was kind enough to join us in Colwell's Court to discuss how he felt about his performances this past weekend and discuss his goals for the future.

**The News-Letter:** How did it feel to break your own school's record in the 200 free?

**Evan Holder:** It's exciting and reinvigorating. I have improved my 200 free time each year for the last two years (sophomore 1:37.77 seconds and junior 1:37.10 seconds) but this drop feels a little different. Even though I only shaved off about 0.2 seconds, breaking through the 1:37.00 mark feels like a more significant drop.

**N - L :** Was the team as a whole satisfied with the third place finish at the TPSC?

**EH:** Yes, absolutely. At this type of meet, Hopkins is not concerned

so much with how we place or our season record. Each team is a little different, but generally swimming teams are judged solely by their performance at the N C A A meet in March. Meets like TPSC are designed to allow swimmers a chance to qualify for the NCAA meet. We unofficially qualified 13 guys and 10 women, and that's a lot! Not to mention, it is likely more will qualify at the College Cup in February.

**N-L:** What is your favorite event to compete in and why?

**EH:** The 200 IM — I like sprinting (50s and 100s) the most, but 200s are really where I've had the most success. I also like swimming all the strokes. The 200 IM allows you to sprint a 50 of each stroke.

**N-L:** Do you have any pre-race superstitions?

**EH:** I'm not very superstitious, but I do have a couple of quirks:

1. Before your swim, you warm up in the warm up pool pretty close to your race. I make sure to towel off extremely well before heading behind the blocks because I need my suit to be completely dry before the race.

2. I always bring a couple of extra caps and an extra set of goggles



HOPKINSSPORTS.COM  
Evan Holder, Hopkins Swimming's NCAA Champion.

behind the blocks before a race.

**N-L:** What are your personal goals for the rest of the season?

**EH:** I've got some personal goal times like 1:43 in the 200 IM, 1:34 in the 200 free and winning a national title or two. But these goal times are just times and rank secondary to the real goal: to become the best version of myself. That might mean winning a national title at NCAAAs or winning two or shaving 0.1 s off my 200 free time or even just challenging a rival. Whatever it is, [this means] putting everything out on the line. No stone is left unturned this season, it's my last.

**N-L:** The team has a month off until your next competition on Jan. 4 in Jupiter, Fla. How will you be preparing over the next few weeks while on winter break?

**EH:** This next part of the season is a grind. When you get home for break, it's critical to put in just as much or more work than before. With winter break comes the most intense training.

### VITAL STATISTICS

**Name:** Evan Holder  
**Year:** Senior  
**Sport:** Swimming  
**Major:** Mechanical Engineering  
**Hometown:** Blue Bell, PA  
**High School:** La Salle College HS

## Big Ten Champ Penn State left out of Playoff

**FOOTBALL, FROM B12**  
championship game, the Huskies deserved to make the playoff.

Now we can talk about the three Big Ten East schools that were in the hunt for a playoff spot. The team chosen, the Ohio State Buckeyes, was the least deserving of the three teams. When comparing the Buckeyes to the Nittany Lions, the first thing any committee should look at is the head-to-head matchup in which Penn State won, even without their team leader in sacks at the time. Penn State leader and defensive end Garrett Sickels was suspended for the first half of the game.

After looking at teams' matchup, the next logical place to look would be the Conference results. There, Ohio State not only lost the Big Ten East to Penn State, but Penn State pulled out an impressive come from behind victory over then number six University of Wisconsin-Madison Badgers to win the conference.

All things weighing completely in Penn State's favor, it is astounding that the committee could say Ohio State is better. The only explanation is in the final team we have to discuss: the University of Michigan Wolverines.

Throughout the year, the Crimson Tide and the Wolverines were the two powerhouses in college

football. They seemed light years ahead of all other teams across the country. The only hiccup Michigan had was their loss to the University of Iowa Hawkeyes by one point.

While the loss seems significant, when you consider that Michigan quarterback Wilton Speight played the end of the game with a broken collarbone and they still almost won, it makes a lot more sense.

In the decisive game between Michigan and Ohio State, Speight was not even supposed to be an option, yet he played with his broken collarbone and allowed Michigan to lead most of the game in the most hostile environment in college football.

Michigan ended up losing in double overtime after a fourth and one run by Ohio State was deemed a first down, though replays show the ball may have been short. A game like that is as good as a tie in the eyes of most fans.

Nevertheless, if you consider the two teams playing on a neutral field with a healthier Speight, it seems obvious that Michigan wins that football game.

Now that Ohio State is out of the picture, it comes down to Michigan and Penn State for the final playoff spot; a decision that comes down to splitting hairs. While Michi-

gan dominated the head-to-head, winning 49-10, that was against a different Penn State team. They were hurt by injuries and had not found their identity yet. Still, a loss that bad cannot be completely disregarded.

The current Penn State team that won their final nine games, averaging 40 points per game, would most definitely fare better against Michigan than the previous confused 2-1 team that played them early in the year. But the big question is, would they win?

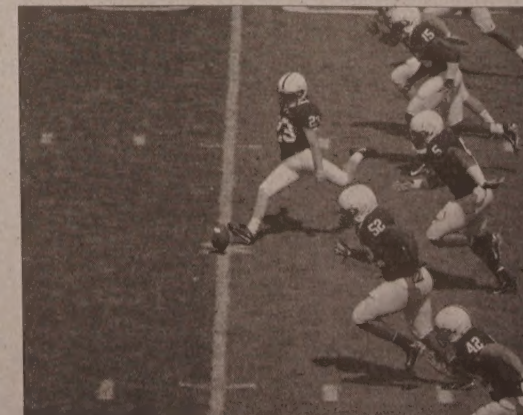
This is a very tough question to answer, and it is the question the College Football Playoff committee should have asked instead of book-ending Ohio State's ticket as soon as they beat a beleaguered Michigan team.

The Playoff system was implemented three years

ago to replace the flawed Bowl Championship Series (BCS) system, which never seemed to get the two best teams into the championship. Under the BCS system, a late loss was the nail in the coffin for teams that had dominated all year. The conditions under which a game was won was never taken under consideration.

One would think the Playoff System was implemented to fix these flaws, yet in just the third year of the system, a team that is not deserving of the top four teams in the country made it into the playoffs over two more qualified teams.

While the playoff games will decide who is deemed National Champions, the selection by the committee to snub Penn State and Michigan will only leave people asking, "What if?"



BEN STANFIELD/CC BY-SA 2.0  
Penn State won nine straight games and the Big Ten Championship.



# SPORTS

## DID YOU KNOW?

Graduate student Austin Vasiliadis had not one, but two ACL surgeries. Still, he has come back to lead the men's basketball team for the 2016 season.

## CALENDAR

Saturday:  
W. Basketball vs.  
Dickinson: 1 p.m.

Happy Holidays!

## The Playoff committee made the wrong call



Gregory Melick  
Sportpinion

This past Sunday, the College Football Playoff committee got together for a final time in order to decide which four teams would make it to the third annual College Football Playoff.

In the end, the choice came down to six teams: the University of Alabama Crimson Tide, the Clemson University Fighting Tigers, the Ohio State Buckeyes, the University of Washington Huskies, the Penn State Nittany Lions and the University of Michigan Wolverines. The decision was a difficult one, but in the end, they got it wrong.

The Committee decided to give Alabama the number one seed, Clemson the number two seed and Ohio State the number three seed. Washington got the final spot at number four. While the consensus was that Alabama should be the number one seed, ev-

everything after that was up in the air entering Sunday.

The number two seeded Clemson Tigers, who were ranked number three behind Ohio State the week before, were definitely the second most solid lock-in for the playoffs after Alabama.

Going 12-1 and winning the Atlantic Coast Conference for the second straight year, Clemson barely held on to the Conference title against a lackluster Virginia Tech team by the score of 42-35. They had by far the easiest matchup last weekend, and yet the game was close for the entirety of the second half.

Skipping over the number three seeded Ohio State Buckeyes (more on them later), the number four seeded Washington Huskies, representing the Pac-12 conference, surprised and upset many people. While they were 12-1, with their only loss coming against a surging University of Southern California team, their out of Conference strength of schedule was absolutely atrocious, ranking 127th in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS).

However, with strong wins against Washington State, Stanford, Utah and a convincing win over Colorado in the Pac-12

SEE FOOTBALL, B11

## Men's basketball falls to Centennial rival



The Blue Jays took on Centennial Conference rivals, the Gettysburg College Bullets, this past weekend in an exciting matchup between the Conference's top two defensive teams. Unfortunately, the Jays fell just short of the win after battling the Bullets to the very last second of the game. Senior forward Ryan Curran led the Jays offensively, topping all scorers with a total of 19 points. Graduate student guard Austin Vasiliadis recorded five points and three assists as he works his way back from injury.

B11

## INSIDE

### DanLand's top 10 games of 2016

As the year comes to a close, columnist Daniel Landy reflects on a year filled with some of the best games ever in college and professional sports.

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### Blue Jay reflection: Brandon Wolfe

Freshman football player Brandon Wolfe reflects on his first season as a Blue Jay and talks about how his team helped him along the way.

PAGE B10

### Colwell's Court: Evan Holder

This week, the Court honors senior swimmer Evan Holder, who currently holds 18 All-American honors and led the Jays to a third place finish this past weekend.

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## INSIDE

## W. Basketball flattened by Muhlenberg Mules

By ESTHER HONG  
For The News-Letter

The Blue Jays struggled to act with urgency in the first quarter of Saturday's game, leading to a 86-72 Centennial Conference loss against the Muhlenberg College Mules.

Sophomore forward Marissa Varnado talked about how the offense struggled to get going toward the beginning. "Our shooting percentage was low from the floor but solid from the line," Varnado said. "We got off to a slow start but fought back a number of times."

MARISSA VARNADO,  
SOPHOMORE FORWARD

in the first quarter with four points. Sophomore forward and center Rory Cole also made an early impact, scoring one point and tallying three rebounds in the first quarter.

Hopkins brought more

energy in the second quarter than they displayed to open the first. The Blue Jays outscored the

Mules 14-6 within the first six minutes of the second quarter.

Muhlenberg's junior guard Brandi Valley helped her team bounce back by scoring eight points within the last four minutes of the first half. Despite freshman forward Kenz Wilkinson hitting the final shot of the half, the Mules still led 45-33.

During the third quarter, the Blue Jays stopped the Mules from expanding their lead. Sophomore guard Madison McGrath contributed nine points in the third quarter with a three-pointer, four free throws, and a lay-up. Muhlenberg's lead was narrowed to nine by the

SEE W. BASKETBALL, B10

## Indoor track debuts at Diplomat Invite

By EMILIE HOFFER  
Sports Editor

Three weeks ago the Blue Jays experienced a moment of euphoria, capturing their fourth NCAA championship in just five years. Nothing can quite top the excitement of a national title for the women coupled with a program-best eighth place finish for the men.

However, these Jays were not about to put their feet up and watch football for the rest of Thanksgiving break.

Just two weeks later, the Jays lined up for their first race of the indoor track season at Franklin & Marshall College's Diplomat Open this past Saturday, Dec 4. Unsurprisingly, the Jays seamlessly transferred their success from the dirt trails onto the track.

Sophomore Erin Brush explained the purpose of racing so early in the season.

"The goal for the first meet is to get everyone back on the track," Brush said. "We are not concerned with trying to qualify for Nationals at this point, but we have a lot of runners end up with fast times because they are in great shape from cross country season."

To start with, after claiming her first NCAA title and All-American honors, sophomore Felicia Koerner made her debut on the track. Koerner not only won the 5,000-meter run but was lapping the competition. Winning by over 30 seconds and clocking in at 16:56, she is now leading the nation in the event.

Also receiving an individual title was junior

Jenn Su, who won both the long jump and the 60-meter hurdles. In the process, Su broke the Hopkins long jump record, leaping 5.43 m to victory. Not to mention, Su placed third in her third event of the day, throwing the shot put 11.75 meters.

As a result of their victories, the two Jays, Koerner and Su, were named the Centennial Conference Women's Indoor Track & Field Athletes of the Week.

The Blue Jays would dominate the distance events, thanks to their lucrative training throughout the cross country season. Adding to the field of talent in the 5k, the Jays placed six more runners in the top 10 behind Koerner. Notably, her classmate, sophomore Natalia LaSpada, also a first time All-American this cross country season, finished in second, topping her previous personal record by nearly 50 seconds.

The remarkable depth this team showed did not stop there. In the 3,000 m the Jays placed six runners in the top seven, led by freshman Rebecca Grusby, who

crossed the line in 10:24.59 to take second.

Meanwhile, the middle-distance group was led by Brush in the mile run. Brush had a close second place finish less

than three seconds behind Dickinson College's first place runner, Adriana Frayne-Reixa. Brush explained the benefits of competing prior to the bulk of their winter season training, which will take place over intersession.

"It is a good indicator for where everyone's training is at and ends up being really motivating for winter training," Brush said.

Accompanying the women on the track, the Hopkins men were equally as impressive early in the season. In the sprints, three Blue Jays tied for third in the 60 m dash and senior Jesse Poore earned a third place finish in the 200 m dash, clocking 22.97. The middle-distance group also had a noteworthy showing in the mile run taking second through fourth place.

However, it was the distance group that once again outdid the competition. Sophomore Scott Pourshalchi led the Jays in the 3,000 m run, where the Jays placed six runners in the top nine. Behind Pourshalchi, who

took second, was junior Leo Potters in third and sophomore Giacomo Taylor in fifth.

After a historic cross country season in which the men had their best finish ever in a NCAA Championship, the Jays dominated the rest of the competition in the 5K. Fourteen of the first 16 finishers to cross the line were wearing the black and blue. Junior Louis Levine led the pack of Jays and took the individual title in the event finishing in 15:33.57.

Furthermore, the men had some outstanding performances in the field events as well. Senior Andrew Bartnett won the pole vault, finishing 0.80 m higher than the next vaulter. Bartnett was named the Centennial Conference Men's Indoor Field Athlete of the Week. Meanwhile, freshman Matthew Su broke the Hopkins record in the long jump, posting a distance of 12.12 m for second place.

The Blue Jays will get some time to rest until their next race this season. Their next meet will be on Jan. 21 at the Maryland Invite in College Park.



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Senior Andrew Bartnett jumps 4.80 m to win the pole vault at the Diplomat Open.